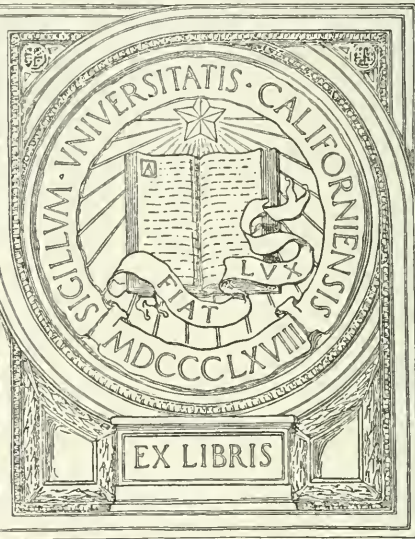


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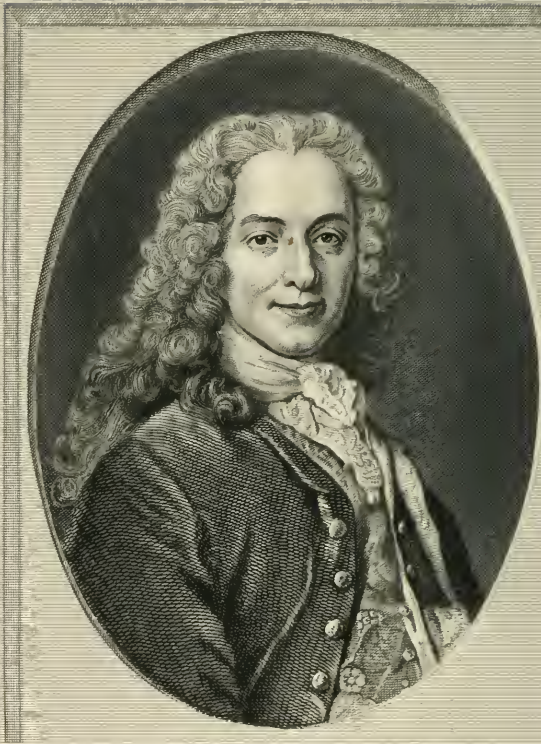
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VOLTAIRE.

At the age of 60.

LIFE
OF
VOLTAIRE.

BY
JAMES PARTON.

C'est dommage, à la vérité, de passer une partie de sa vie à détruire de vieux châteaux enchantés.
Il vaudrait mieux établir des vérités que d'examiner des mensonges; mais où sont les vérités?

VOLTAIRE, 1700

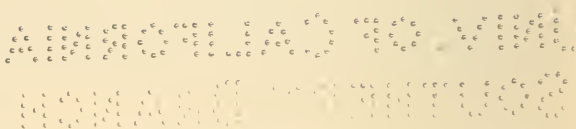
VOLUME I.



BOSTON:
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY.
The Riverside Press, Cambridge.
1881.

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The Riverside Press, Cambridge :
Stereotyped and Printed by H. O. Houghton & Co.

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PREFACE.

I ATTEMPT in these volumes to exhibit to the American people the most extraordinary of Frenchmen, and one of the most extraordinary of human beings.

When first I ventured, many years ago, to think of this task, I soon ceased to wonder why a subject so alluring had not been undertaken before by any one employing the whole of the existing material. Voltaire was then buried under a mountain of heterogeneous record. The attempts of essayists, even those of the first rank, to characterize him truly were in some degree frustrated by an abundance of unsorted information that defied all ordinary research. Since that time the Voltairean material has continued to accumulate, and never so rapidly as during the last three years.

At this moment, if I lift my eyes from the desk on which I write, I see before me volumes containing fifty thousand printed pages of his composition, including more than two hundred and sixty separate publications. The published correspondence of Voltaire now comprises more than ten thousand letters. The works relating to him and his doings form a catalogue of four hundred and twenty-eight entries, which will probably be increased before these volumes see the light. Scarcely a month passes without some addition to the wonderful mass. At one time it is a series of letters found in a grocer's shop, or rendered accessible by the death of an heir of one of his princely correspondents; now, an enterprising editor gives his readers an unpublished poem; recently, Mr. Gallatin deposited in the library of the New York Historical Society sixty-six pieces of paper and card containing words written or dictated by him; and in September, 1880, came from Paris

Flake 1926. 2

the announcement of "Le Sottisier de Voltaire," from one of the eighteen volumes of manuscript in his library at Petersburg. No sooner is an edition of his works published than it is made incomplete by a new discovery. Since the issue of the ninety-seven-volume edition in 1834, enough matter has accumulated to fill six or seven volumes more.

Still more strange, the mass of his writings, and, I may even say, every page of them, has to this hour a certain vitality and interest. If it has not intrinsic excellence, it possesses the interest of an obsolete kind of agreeable folly; if it is not truth, it is a record of error that instructs or amuses. He was mistaken in supposing that no man could go to posterity laden with so much baggage. In some cases it is the baggage that floats him, and many readers of to-day find his prefaces, notes, and introductions more entertaining than the work hidden in the midst of them. Nearly every page of this printed matter contains at least an atom of biography, and I can fairly claim to have had my eye upon it, indexed it, and given it consideration.

At the end of this volume will be found a list of the publications relating to Voltaire (Appendix I.), and this is followed by the catalogue of his own works (Appendix II.); both lists being arranged in the order of their publication, and the titles translated into English.

The reader is probably aware that every circumstance in the history of this man, from the date of his birth to the resting-place of his bones, is matter of controversy. If I had paused to state the various versions of each event and the interpretations put upon each action, this work would have been ten volumes instead of two. It would have been, like many other biographies, not a history of the man, but a history of the struggles of the author in getting at the man. Generally, therefore, I have given only the obvious or most probable truth, and have often refrained from even mentioning anecdotes and statements that I knew to be groundless. Why prolong the life of a falsehood merely for the sake of refuting it?

The Voltaire of these volumes is the nearest to the true one that I have been able to gather and construct. I think the

man is to be found in these pages delineated by himself. But he was such an enormous personage that another writer, equally intent upon truth, could find in the mass of his remains quite another Voltaire. I received once from Paris, in the same parcel, two books about him, both written, as it seemed, by honest, able, and resolute men. One was the work of the Abbé Maynard, a canon of Poitiers, who ended his two thick volumes of laborious vituperation by saying that Voltaire was a mere "monkey of genius, who amused and diverted by his funny tricks." The other work, "Le Vrai Voltaire," by Edouard de Pompery, spoke of him as the most virtuous man of his age, because he did the most good to his kind, and because there was in his heart the most burning love of justice and truth. "Voltaire," this author continued, "was the best Christian of his time, the first and the most glorious disciple of Jesus."

There was space in Voltaire to include these extremes. He was faulty enough to gratify the prejudice of that honest priest; he was good enough to kindle, justify, and sustain the enthusiasm of that young philanthropist.

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LIFE OF VOLTAIRE.

CHAPTER I.

ANCESTORS.

FRANÇOIS-MARIE AROUET, who at the age of twenty-four assumed the name of Voltaire, was born at Paris on Sunday, November 21, 1694.

At that time Louis XIV. had been for fifty-one years styled King of France, and had twenty-one years to live. William and Mary reigned in England. Prussia was a dukedom. Charles XII. of Sweden was a good and studious boy of twelve under his father's tutelage, and Peter I. of Russia, twelve years Czar, had not begun to build the present capital of the Russian Empire. The great Newton, still in the prime of his years, had done the immortal part of his work, and was about to become Master of the Mint. Racine lived, the first name in the literature of the Continent, and Dryden, the head of English literature, was translating Virgil. Pope was six years of age.

François-Marie was the first of the Arouets to acquire distinction, and he neither knew nor cared for his pedigree. In one of the last weeks of his life, when a local genealogist wrote to him to say that two cities of old Poitou were contending for the honor of having nourished his ancestors, he replied by a jocular allusion to the seven cities that claimed to be the birthplace of Homer, and added, "I have no way of reconciling this dispute."¹ In his vast correspondence, all topics are more frequently touched upon than that of his own family and origin. In old age he wrote once to a neighbor who meditated buying a piece of land in which he held a life interest, "Now, sir, I give you notice that I count upon living to the age of eighty-two at least, since my grandfather, who

¹ Voltaire to Du Moustier de La Fond, April 7, 1778

was as dried up as I am, and wrote neither verse nor prose, lived to eighty-three."¹

This dried-up grandfather was François Arouet, of Paris, a retired draper, living in 1666 in his own house, Rue St. Denis, with his two children, Marie and François. Country born and bred, he had come up to Paris in early life, probably with some capital, and, having established himself in business, had thriven, married, and gained a competence. It was a time when a Paris tradesman could comfortably retire upon a capital of a hundred thousand francs.

The family was ancient and respectable. The earliest ancestor of whom anything is known was Helenus Arouet, who was living in 1525 at a village in the valley of the Thouet, a tributary of the Loire, not far from Poitiers, and about two hundred miles southwest of Paris. He was a tanner by trade, married a tanner's daughter, and brought up one of his sons a tanner. He possessed and transmitted two small estates. Probably the family had been established in the region for generations: an ancestor may have witnessed the battle of Poitiers in 1356, whence the Black Prince bore away captive to England John, King of France. There is no part of France more purely and primitively French than that portion of the old province of Poitou. A grandson of this Helenus Arouet, who was also named Helenus, passed his days at the little town of St. Loup, in the same neighborhood, where he became the father of five children, and inherited one of his grandfather's small estates. François, the retired cloth merchant of Paris, was one of his sons. After serving the usual long apprenticeship to a weaver in a village of the same neighborhood, François Arouet passed some years in business at his native city of St. Loup, and then made a bold stroke to improve his circumstances in removing to Paris. This he did about the year 1621, when the Pilgrim Fathers of New England were starving through their first summer at Plymouth. When he died, in 1667, a dried-up grandfather of eighty-three, his son François was eighteen years of age, and his daughter Marie was twenty. She married Mathurin Marchand, a "purveyor to Monsieur, the brother of the king."

Besides these lineal ancestors of Voltaire, we have slight

¹ 2 *Lettres Inédites de Voltaire*, 163. Paris, 1857.

occasional notices of other connections and relations, all indicating the respectable bourgeois rank of the family. He speaks himself, in his "Charles XII." (Book V.), of deriving important information from "the letters of M. Bru, my relation, first dragoman (*drogman*, he spells it) at the Ottoman Porte." Jean Arouet, a near relation of his father, was the apothecary of St. Loup for many years, and Samuel Arouet, another relation, was the notary of the same place. But there is no trace of a literary man in any record of the family yet discovered: for that René Arouet, notary and poet of Poitou, who died in 1499, and who has been reckoned among the progenitors of Voltaire for a century past, proves to be René Adouet.¹

It was then not alone the extremely dry grandfather of Voltaire who wrote neither prose nor verse. No known Arouet has ever written except François-Marie Arouet, the subject of this work. A thriving, painstaking race they seem to have been, with some spirit of enterprise among them; trustworthy, vivacious, irascible, but not gifted, nor interested in the products of the gifted. The occupations often chosen by them — tanner, weaver, draper, apothecary, purveyor, notary — are such as required exactness, fidelity, patience, and contentment with moderate gains.

St. Loup, in or near which for many generations the Arouets exercised such useful and homely vocations, is an ancient little city, the centre of the wine, leather, and wool trade of the vicinity, containing at present seventeen hundred inhabitants. Sheep, cattle, asses, and the vine, then as now, made the wealth of the region round about, and the trades of the Arouets, particularly tanner, weaver, and draper, are still among those that most flourish there. In portions of the department, now named Deux-Sèvres, industry is almost confined, says Reclus, to tanning and weaving, and to the breeding of horses, asses, and mules. During the Revolution, St. Loup, mindful of its Arouets and their famous descendant, changed its ancient name to Voltaire. But the new appellation did not adhere. At present they who would find the name upon the map of the world must look for it among the possessions of Great Britain. Cape Voltaire is a headland of Australia.

¹ La Jeunesse de Voltaire, par Desnoiresterres, page 6.

CHAPTER II.

NOTARIES IN FRANCE.

FRANÇOIS AROUET, the father of Voltaire, was a Paris notary in large practice. Left an orphan at the age of eighteen, joint heir with his sister Marie of a considerable estate, he could choose an occupation deemed more eligible than that of draper, by which his father had thriven. He became, therefore, by purchase, one of the hundred and thirteen notaries licensed in Paris under Louis XIV.

In the Latin nations of Europe, as frequenters of the Italian opera and all readers of French and Spanish literature must have observed, notaries are more important functionaries than they are now with us. Columbus and the other navigators of his age had notaries with them to witness and attest their taking possession of discovered lands. A royal notary witnessed the king's signature when he gave a coronet or renounced a crown. Readers will readily recall the notary of comedy and opera, who enters in the closing scene, — an odd figure in a black robe, with long, curling wig, and a hat of any preposterous and unauthorized shape which the resources of the theatre can supply. He advances to a table provided for him, and salutes the company with official gayety or official gloom, according to the nature of the service he is about to render. He is the personage waited for, and his entrance often crowns the occasion; for in France, as in Italy and Spain, no betrothal, marriage contract, will, agreement, or record has legal validity unless it bears the attestation of a licensed notary. Hence his importance in life and his utility in literature. The entrance of the notary, followed by his clerk, both robed in black, deepens the gloom of a tragic finale; and the same personages are available for the farcical element in a romantic drama, and add comic force to an act of Molière.

In countries where few can write, but all are subject to the same laws, some such practitioner as the Roman *notarius*, the French *notaire*, the English notary, is indispensable; and we should still find him so in the United States and Great Britain if most of us had not learned to write our documents for ourselves. The father of John Milton was a London notary in the reign of James I., and the business was then so lucrative in England that he earned by it the estate that enabled him to give his son every educational advantage which the wealthiest nobleman could have procured for an heir, including twenty consecutive years of study and fifteen months of foreign travel. All that a London notary was in 1620, when John Milton was a boy, a Paris notary was when Voltaire was born, seventy-four years after.

Under Louis XIV., there was required to be one notary in every parish of the kingdom that contained sixty households; two in the smaller market towns, from four to ten in the larger; twenty in towns having a parliament, and one hundred and thirteen in Paris: so many, but no more. The notaries were commissioned by the king; they were allowed to exhibit over their door the royal arms as a sign; they could stand in the exercise of their vocation at the door of the king's cabinet. As most charges in the time of Louis XIV. were purchasable, a notary could buy, sell, give, and bequeath his business, provided the recipient was a Catholic Frenchman of twenty-five years, had satisfied the conscription, had studied the profession of notary six years, and served one year as a notary's first clerk.

Besides the more interesting duties mentioned above, notaries drew, attested, and registered such documents as leases, deeds, transfers, agreements of all kinds, papers relating to annuities, bankruptcies, gifts, reversions, apprenticeships, and all other services. Their legal fee was very small. The old notarial manuals enumerate fifty-one acts for which a notary could charge but one franc, and these comprised nearly all that would commonly be required in the country or in country towns. There were two fees allowed of two francs, seven of three francs, three of five francs, one of ten francs, four of fifteen francs, one of twenty-five francs. Reading over the list of these moderate fees, we wonder how a notary, even as busy

and thriving as the father of Voltaire, could have gained a revenue of several thousand francs a year, until we come to the transactions for which he was allowed to charge a percentage of the sum involved. If a gentleman had money to lend, it was to his notary that he applied to find a borrower, and the notary received a percentage of the amount. The lending of money and the purchase of annuities were important branches of notarial business, the judicious cultivation of which rendered the notary himself a capitalist, and enabled him to use to his own signal advantage the knowledge of families and estates which it belonged to his vocation to possess. A very large proportion of the business done among us by solicitors, attorneys, conveyancers, brokers, note discounters, life insurers, and confidential family lawyers was and is performed in France by notaries.

The profession bears an honorable name, which is justified by the excellent character of its members. Their commission being an estate, which can be sold, transferred, or bequeathed, but which can also be lost by misconduct, notaries are subject to that force and composition of motives to do right which experience shows to be generally necessary and generally sufficient. From the earliest ages the profession has increased in importance, even to the present time, when a notary, in such practice as Voltaire's father had, gains a quarter of a million francs a year, and when there is a stately edifice in Paris, called The Chamber of Notaries, which is in fact the real-estate exchange of France, as well as the Paris notaries' rendezvous. The profession boasts a literature. Even in a New York library is a massive volume of 816 pages, "Nouveau Manuel des Notaires," published in 1818, and "Le Parfait Notaire," in three larger volumes, published in 1821.

The rank of a French notary in the time of Louis XIV. is difficult to fix, because, strictly speaking, he had no rank, either in the legal profession or in the social scale. In Roman times he was a slave, as most men were who performed useful offices. A French author discovered, some years since, among stray parchments, an ordinance of Philippe le Bel, dated 1304, which forbade members of this profession to exercise the barber's trade, because, being the depository of family secrets, a notary ought not to be trusted with the use of a barber's im-

plements, which then included the lancet and the knife, as well as the razor and the shears. The ordinance added that, since the business of a notary did not furnish the means of subsistence, he could exercise any trade except that of barber.¹ As life grew more complicated in France, the business of notaries increased, until their importance had far outgrown their technical rank, and given them a standing not unlike that of a solicitor in an English town, whose tin boxes are stuffed with family papers, and who knows the secrets of half the county families.

In a satirical romance, published in Paris when Voltaire was a boy, there is a "tariff or valuation of matches," designed, as the author says, to exhibit the "corruption of the age which had introduced the custom of marrying one sack of money to another sack of money." This table, burlesque though it be, is the burlesque of a not unskillful hand, and it may help us to understand the social importance of notaries in Paris then. According to this authority, a girl who had a dowry of two thousand to ten thousand francs was a match for a retail trader, a lawyer's clerk, or a bailiff. A dowry of ten to twelve thousand francs justified a maiden in aspiring to a dealer in silk, a draper, an innkeeper, a secretary to a great lord. A young lady of twelve to twenty thousand francs was a match for a clerk of court, an attorney, a court registrar, A NOTARY. She who possessed twenty to thirty thousand francs might look as high as an advocate or a government officer of considerable rank. Higher grades in the law and government service could be matched by dowries rising from thirty thousand francs to a hundred thousand crowns; which last could be fairly wedded to "a real marquis," a president of a parliament, a peer of France, a duke.²

By courtesy a notary was called *maître*, a word which has as many shades of meaning as our word *master*, and, like master, is not always a title of honor. Applied to a notary, it was a flattering intimation that he, too, belonged to the law, — *la robe*, — which had its *noblesse*, its retainers, and its servants of many grades.

¹ Histoire de la Détention des Philosophes et Gens de Lettres à la Bastille, etc., par J. Delort. Paris, 1829. Vol. ii. p. 11.

² Le Roman Bourgeois. Paris, 1712. Page 18.

CHAPTER III.

BIRTH AND HOME.

MAÎTRE FRANÇOIS AROUET is known to have been a competent notary ; but, in accordance with the system into which he was born, he obtained every step in his profession by purchase. In 1675, when he was twenty-six years of age, his seven years' apprenticeship being accomplished, he bought for ten thousand francs, duly paid to his predecessor, the place of notary to the city court of Paris, called the Châtelet. The sum was large for that primitive day, before John Law had inflated the mind, as well as the money, of France. We can get an idea of its value from one of Madame de Maintenon's letters of 1680, in which she says that her brother and his wife kept house handsomely in Paris, paying rent, having a good dinner every day, keeping ten domestics, two coachmen, and four horses, upon nine thousand francs a year, of which they allowed three thousand for the theatre, cards, fancies, and "magnificences." In other words, Maître Arouet's ten thousand francs was equivalent to at least sixty thousand francs of the present time.

A thriving young notary, with a good office, several important clients, and some capital of his own to lend them, could marry out of his sphere, even under Louis XIV. In 1683, when he had reached the prudent age of thirty-four, Maître Arouet married Mademoiselle Marguerite d'Aumard, of a noble family of Poitou, the ancient province of the Arouets. Nicholas d'Aumard, her father, had held a post of dignity in the parliament of his province, and her brother an office of some authority under the king. Their marriage contract, which is still preserved and accessible, indicates that her rank had its influence upon the terms of the union ; she bringing to him a smaller dowry than he might have demanded from an equal, and he making for her, in case she

survived him, a more liberal provision than was usual in his rank. A French author, who has recently read the document, reports that the marriage, on the part of the husband, was far from being "a marriage of money."¹

Of this lady, the mother of Voltaire, we know too little. In all the multifarious writings of her son, I find but five meagre lines about his mother, though she lived till he was seven years of age. Only twice in his works, I believe, occur the words *ma mère*, when he means his own mother; and he records of her three particulars, not unimportant, but all needing explanation. One is that Ninon de Lenclos had formerly known *ma mère*; another is that *ma mère* had been much the friend of the Abbé de Châteauneuf, Ninon's last lover; and the third that *ma mère* had once seen the poet Boileau, and said of him that he was "a good book and a silly man."²

As François Arouet was notary both to Ninon and to Boileau, his name still being legible upon the poet's will, his wife's acquaintance with both may have been accidental and momentary. The notarial office was, for some years, only a room in the family abode. But the gay, the witty, the worldly Abbé de Châteauneuf, we know, was an intimate friend of the mother and of the house, — a fact which goes far to prove that the incongruous element now introduced into the ancient line of the steady-going Arouets was brought to it by Marguerite d'Aumard, of the old Poitou noblesse.

The marriage was too fruitful for the delicate mother's welfare. Within ten months, twin boys were born, one of whom soon died, and the other, Armand by name, lived to succeed his father. Less than thirteen months after was born Marguerite-Catherine, the sister whom Voltaire loved, mother of Madame Denis. In twenty months more, Robert was born, who died in infancy. On Sunday, November 21, 1694, after an interval of five years, the child was born who named himself, twenty-four years after, Voltaire, but who received, on Monday, November 22, 1694, at the baptismal font of a church in Paris, the name of François-Marie.

¹ Jeunesse de Voltaire, page 9.

² 63 Œuvres de Voltaire, page 168. 80 Œuvres de Voltaire, page 300.

He seems to have always supposed that he was born February 20, 1694; but the baptismal register, drawn under the eye, and perhaps by the hand, of his own father, one of the first notaries of Paris, bears date November 22d, and adds, "Born the day previous." A letter has also been recently discovered which removes the last doubt. A Poitou cousin, who wrote home from Paris, November 24, 1694, gives this item of family news: "Father, our cousins have another son, born three days ago. Madame Arouet will give me the christening cakes for you and the family. She has been very sick; but it is hoped she will now mend. The child has but a weakly appearance, resulting from the mother's low condition."¹

He was the last child of his parents, and when he was born his brother Armand was ten years old, and his sister Marguerite nine.

He was born into an affluent and, as it appears, a cheerful and agreeable home. His father, in the prime of life, had acquired the title of counselor to the king, as well as the post of notary to the Châtelet. This latter place, owing apparently to the increase of his private practice, he sold in 1692. Among his clients were the heads of several historic houses, ducal and other. "Many a time," says the Duke de St. Simon, "I have seen him [Maître Arouet] bring papers for my father to sign;" and again, "He was my father's notary, and mine as long as he lived."² The Duke de Sully, the Duke de Praslin, the Duke de Richelieu, the Count de Morangiés, are mentioned among his clients; upon whom, we may infer, he waited assiduously in their houses, but received ordinary clients at his own abode in "the city," decorated and designated by the royal arms. The Duchess de St. Simon held one of his children at the font, with the Duke de Richelieu by her side, and there are other indications that Maître Arouet was the man of confidence to his noble clients, and held in high esteem by them. Always thriving, he bought in 1701 another office, — one more lucrative than that of notary to the Châtelet, if not of more importance.

There was then a certain ancient high court in Paris, called

¹ *Jeunesse de Voltaire*, page 4.

² 13 *Mémoires de St. Simon*, 55. 14 *Mémoires de St. Simon*, 10. Paris. 1874.

the Chamber of Accounts, which stood above all the collectors of the revenue, decided questions relating to the king's claims and dues, and, in general, saw that the royal treasury received no detriment. Duplicates of documents relating to titles, successions, reversions, and estates were stored away in the pile of ancient structures in which it had its seat. It performed, or professed to perform, much that is done with us by auditors, registrars, the court of claims, and investigating committees. Being an ancient court of an ancient monarchy, and having in charge the king's most vital interest, it had grown to preposterous proportions, and gave pretext to such an extraordinary number of snug offices, useful only to the incumbents of the same, that the *Chambre des Comptes* became a by-word in France for hoary abuse and cumbrous inadequacy, like the English Court of Chancery at a later day.

It was an office in this ancient court which Maître Arouet bought in 1701, and which, after holding for the rest of his life, he resigned to his eldest son, Armand, who enjoyed it as long as he lived. The office was that of "payer of fees to the Chamber of Accounts." At that period, litigants in French courts paid fees to the judges who tried their causes. It was the duty of Maître Arouet to collect such fees in the court to which he was attached, and pay them to the judges, receiving at the same time a fee for his own services. Either the causes were numerous or the fees were large, for it is a matter of record that the revenue of this office in the year 1700 was thirteen thousand francs.

As he retained always his private notarial practice, Maître Arouet could henceforth be reckoned among the opulent bourgeois of Paris, his annual income being, as probable tradition reports, twenty-four thousand francs. From an attested document we learn that he possessed a country-house at Chatenay, a beautiful village five miles from the city. That he kept a gardener his undutiful son has told us. "I had a father formerly," wrote Voltaire, in 1772, to La Harpe, "who was as bad a scold as Grichard [in the comedy of the "Grondeur"]. One day, after he had horribly and without cause scolded his gardener, and had almost beaten him, he said to him, 'Get out, you rascal! I wish you may find a master as patient as I am.' I took my father to see the 'Grondeur,' having before-

hand asked the actor to add those identical words to his part ; and my good father corrected himself a little.”¹

This anecdote of the prosperous, irascible bourgeois is nearly all the light which the writings of the son cast upon the father. He mentions more than once that on a certain occasion his father saw the aged poet, Corneille, and even took wine with him. The young notary was no more pleased with the old dramatist than his wife with Boileau. “My father told me,” wrote Voltaire in 1772, “that that great man was the most wearisome mortal he had ever seen, and the man of the lowest conversation.”²

¹ 91 Œuvres de Voltaire, 246.

² 80 Œuvres de Voltaire, 433.

CHAPTER IV.

HIS CHILDHOOD.

FRANÇOIS-MARIE, the last born of a weakly and declining mother, was abandoned to the care of a nurse, who had charge of him in an upper room of the paternal abode. He had at first but the feeblest breath of life, and the family did not expect to rear him. Every morning, for several months, the nurse came down-stairs to tell his mother that the child was dying, and every day the Abbé de Châteauneuf, godfather of the infant and familiar friend of its parents, went up-stairs to discuss with the nurse some new expedient for saving its life. So reports the Abbé Duvernet, who heard from an old friend of Voltaire all that he usually told of his earliest days. It was not till the child had languished the greater part of a year that he began to mend sufficiently to give his parents hopes of saving him. Gradually from that time he gained strength, and became at length a healthy and active child, though never robust.

It fared otherwise with the mother, who, so far as we know, contributed nothing to the formation of this boy except the friends whom she attracted to her home and who continued to frequent it when she was no more. She lingered seven years after his birth, dying July 13, 1701, aged forty.

His father, a busy, thriving man, occupied with his office, his clients, and his growing capital, appears to have concerned himself no more about the boy than busy fathers usually did about their young children. He must have been a liberal and agreeable man, if only to keep about him the learned and gifted persons whom his wife may have originally drawn. But, so far as we know, he taught his son nothing but the art of thriving, and this he did without intending it. Such knowledge pervaded the air of the notary's home,

and the boy inhaled it unconsciously. He had inherited, from his father, a vast estate, with annuities, reversions, estates, revenues, interest, shares, mortgages, all of which the son came to understand and handle better than any other literary man of any age. He had the stuff out of which his father's business and speculations were made. The old man little thought what an accomplished notary his younger son was learning to be, when he disturbed the clerks assiduously copying in the notarial office, and played with the rolls of parchment. He caught the secret of all that exact and patient industry, though it disgusted him.

Of his sister we know little more than that she was his favorite in the small household, as far as a sister of sixteen might be to a boy of seven. She was married young to one of the numerous officers of the Chamber of Accounts, and became the mother of four children, descendants of whom are still living in France, and have even figured in French politics within living memory. One of her grandsons, M. d'Hornoi, was a member of the House of Deputies in 1827. Her children and grandchildren supplied the sole legitimate domestic element in Voltaire's life, and connected him with his country's social system. To this boy of seven, left motherless, she could be only the good elder sister; not always patient with his whims, not capable of directing his mind, and much absorbed, doubtless, as girls naturally are, with the opening romance of her own life.

Her brother Armand, who was seventeen years of age at the death of their mother, had already imbibed at the seminary of St. Magloire, in Paris, extreme and gloomy views of religion, which he held through life. He touched Voltaire only to repel him. "My Jansenist of a brother," he frequently calls Armand, — a term equivalent to Roman Catholic Calvinist. Credulous, superstitious, austere, devout, Armand passed his days, as many worthy people did in that age, and do in this age, in making virtue odious and repulsive. The contrast which he presents to his brother is not unusual in religious communities, but is seldom so complete and striking as in this instance. It recalls to mind that incongruous brother of John Milton, the long-forgotten Christopher Milton; extreme tory and High Churchman, partisan most zealous of the three Stuarts, knighted and raised to the bench

by James II. Armand Arouet carried his credulity to the point of writing a work defending the Convulsionist miracles, which is said to exist among the Voltaire manuscripts at Petersburg; and Duvernet assures us that in 1786 there could still be seen, above the pulpit of the church in which Voltaire was baptized, a votive offering, placed there by Armand Arouet in expiation of his brother's unbelief.

This elder brother, then, had little to do with forming the motherless child, except to make him recoil with loathing and contempt from whatever savored of the serious and the elevated.

Among the frequenters of the Arouet home were three persons who enjoyed the ecclesiastical title of abbé without possessing other ecclesiastical quality. In old Paris there were many such, most of them younger sons of noble families, who had taken nominally a course of theology, in case anything good should fall in their way which a secular abbé could enjoy,— a canonicate, or a portion of the revenues of a veritable abbey. In the olden time, it seems, the monks were accustomed to place their convent under the protection of a powerful lord, by electing him their abbé and assigning him a part of their income. From the chief of a great house to a younger son of the same was a natural transition; and hence the swarm of abbés, in semi-clerical garb, more or less endowed with clerical revenue, who figured in French society of that century,— gentlemen of leisure, scholars by profession, and much given as a class to the more decorous audacities of unbelief. The French are not particular in the matter of titles. In the course of time any man in France who had a tincture of the ecclesiastic in him might style himself abbé,— a word that, after all, only means father.

The Abbé Rochebrune was one of these, described by Voltaire himself, in after years, as an agreeable poet, and still known to collectors as the author of a cantata upon the story of Orpheus, which was set to music by Clérambault, a noted composer and organist of Paris. This cantata was performed at court before Louis XIV., with great applause, at a time when such compositions were in the highest vogue.

Nicholas Gédoyen, another of the abbés, was a more im-

portant and more interesting person. Like Rochebrune, he was the scion of an ancient race, a circumstance that gave him a canonicate and a revenue from two abbeys while he was still in the prime of manhood. He had a passion for the classic authors of antiquity, and published free translations of Quintilian and Pausanias, which remained for two generations popular works in France, and are still read. He was one of that antique race of scholars who could not go anywhere without their pocket Horace. He loved his Horace, and wrote a "Conversation" upon him. The titles of his works show the bent of his mind: "Life of Epaminondas," "Roman Urbanity," "The Pleasures of the Table among the Greeks," "Apology for Translations," "The Ancients and the Moderns," "The Judgments of Photius upon the Greek Orators." He also wrote a treatise upon the "Education of Children," that explains in part the warm interest which we know

he took in the education of the little François Arouet, whom he influenced powerfully and decisively. Jesuit, canon, and abbé as he was, he was as much pagan as Christian; or, as Voltaire more politely expresses it, in his list of the authors of Louis XIV.'s time: "The Abbé Géroyn was so warmly enamored of the authors of antiquity that he willingly pardoned their religion in consideration of the beauties of their works and their mythology." The genial abbé had little love of modern authors. He thought the human mind had lapsed and narrowed under Christianity, and that great poetry and great eloquence had passed away with the mythology of the Greeks. Milton's "Paradise Lost" seemed to him a "barbarous poem, of a fanaticism dismal and disgusting, in which the Devil howled without ceasing against the Messiah."

This amiable and enthusiastic scholar, nourished and limited by the literature of the past, loved the child, associated familiarly with him all through his forming years, and breathed into him that love of the ancient models which his works so remarkably exhibit. Géroyn, like Rochebrune, was interested in music. He goes so far as to say that the moderns cannot in the least appreciate the poems of Pindar, because the music is lost to which they were sung.

Châteauneuf was the third of our abbés, the early guides and tutors of this susceptible spirit. Here we touch music

again, for this abbé has a place in the catalogue of French writers only as the author of a "Treatise upon the Music of the Ancients." The particular tie which bound these abbés together was probably their common regard for Ninon de Lenclos, whose father was an amateur lutist of celebrity and learning, and she was well skilled in the instruments of the time. They were all members of the elegant and distinguished circle which gathered round Ninon in her old age, one charm of whose abode was the excellent music furnished by herself and her guests. The little Arouet had no ear for music, but he had an ear very susceptible and attentive to other lessons taught him by his abbés.

Châteauneuf loved the French classics as much as Géroyn loved the Greek and Roman; Racine was his favorite among the French poets, who always remained Voltaire's. "Sixty years ago," wrote Voltaire in 1766, "the Abbé de Châteauneuf said to me, 'My child, let the world talk as it will, Racine will gain every day, and Corneille lose.'"

This last lover of Ninon was brother to the Marquis de Châteauneuf, a person of note in the diplomacy of the time, ambassador to Holland and to Turkey at a later day. The abbé was a gay, decorous, and genial man of the world, known in all agreeable circles, and, as St. Simon records, "welcome in the best." In particular, he frequented the opulent and elegant abode of the Abbé de Chaulieu, poet and epicure, who drew thirty thousand francs a year from the revenues of country abbeys, which he spent in Paris, entertaining princes, poets, and literary churchmen. This luxurious ecclesiastic lived near the Arouets, and his house was the door through which the youngest of them was to make his way to the elevated social spheres.

But it was the Abbé Châteauneuf who was the child's first instructor. In his character of godfather, he had promised to see that the boy was duly instructed in religion, and reared in accordance with the laws and usages of the Catholic Church. Voltaire told his intimate friends how his godfather fulfilled this vow. He first made the child read and repeat the rhymed fables of La Fontaine, — new works then, the author having survived till this boy was half a year old. Duvernet mentions a piece by another hand, which, he says, the boy knew by heart

when he was three years of age, — “*La Moïsade*,” a fugitive poem then in great vogue among these gay abbés, who lived upon the revenues of a church which they despised and undermined.

We need not believe that the boy knew this piece by heart at three years of age; but it was among the pieces of verse which he first heard and longest remembered. Such productions, common as they afterwards were, had in 1697 the combined charm of novelty and danger. They circulated in manuscript from hand to hand, and from circle to circle; grave men and famous women copied them into their diaries, where they may still be read, together with those satires and squibs which caused the government of the Bourbons to be described as a despotism tempered by epigrams. This “*Moïsade*” is a short poem in the deistical taste; its main purport being that all of religion is a device of interested men, excepting alone the doctrine of a Supreme Being. Moses, according to this poet, availed himself of the credulity of the ignorant multitude in order to secure obedience to good laws. It concludes thus: —

“Men vain and fanatical receive, without difficulty, the most chimerical fables. A little word about eternity renders them benign and peaceful; and thus the whole of a stupefied people are reduced to kiss the ligatures that strangle them. By such arts Moses knew how to fix the restless spirit of the Hebrews, and took captive their credulity by ranging his politic laws under the standard of the Divinity. He pretended to have seen upon a distant mountain celestial visions. He gave those rustics to understand that God, in his splendor and majesty, had appeared before his dazzled eyes. Authentic tables he showed them, containing God’s will. He supported by pathetic tones a tale so well invented, and the entire people was enchanted with those magnificent fooleries. Cunning falsehood passing for truth established the authority of that legislator, and gave currency to the politic errors by which the world was infected.”

Such was the lesson taught the infant Arouet through the instrumentality of his godfather; and probably the whole Arouet household and circle approved it, except his brother Armand. Such was the tone of the circle of abbés, poets, and placemen who lived in the neighborhood, and had to do with the formation of this most susceptible boy, from his infancy to mature age.

There was such a stir in matters religious during the ten years spent at his father's house that so eager and intelligent a boy as he was could not have failed to know something of it. In writing certain passages, half a century later, of his "Age of Louis XIV.," he may have drawn upon his own recollections as a little child. It was about 1702, as he therein records, that a strong feeling arose within the church itself against the filthy relics with which every altar then reeked. Readers who have chanced to see the old English ballad of Cromwell's time, called "A Journey into France," may have supposed that its list of the relics in Notre Dame of Paris was a mere invention of a "natural enemy." Besides a sleeve and a slipper of the Virgin Mary, the poet enumerates among "the sights of Nostre Dame," —

"Her Breasts, her Milk, her very Gown
Which she did weare in Bethlem town,
When in the Inne she lay ;
Yet all the world knows that 's a fable,
For so good Cloaths ne'r lay in stable,
Upon a lock of Hay.

"There is one of the Crosses Nails,
Which whoso sees his bonnet vales,
And if he will, may kneel :
Some say, 't is false, 't was never so,
Yet, feeling it, thus much I know,
It is as true as Steel." ¹

This catalogue of disgust was probably not invented by the poet, for we know that offensive objects, similarly described, were actually exhibited in the chief church of France when François-Marie Arouet was a child in his father's house, near by. It was in 1702, when he was eight years of age, he tells us, that there arose in France a bishop—Gaston-Louis de Noailles—who was brave enough to take from his metropolitan church, at Chalons on the Marne, a relic which had been adored for ages as the navel of Jesus Christ. This bishop had the courage to throw away the monstrous thing.

"All Chalons murmured against the bishop. Presidents, counselors, placemen, royal treasurers, merchants, men of note, canons, priests, protested unanimously, in legal form, against the enterprise of the bishop, demanding the return of the navel, and supporting

¹ Musarum Deliciæ, London, 1656.

their demand by referring to the robe of Jesus Christ preserved at Argenteuil, his handkerchief at Turin and at Laon, one of the nails of the cross at St. Denis, and so many other relics which we preserve and despise, and which do so much wrong to the religion that we revere. But the wise firmness of the bishop carried the day at last over the credulity of the people.”¹

This movement had indeed originated some years before with Jean de Launoi, a famous and learned doctor of Paris, who made such effective war against the falsities of the Roman calendar as to acquire the name of Saint Expeller (*Dénicheur de Saints*). He had the mania to scrutinize the historical claims of popular saints, and, if he found the testimony insufficient, erased them from his list. “He is terrible alike to heaven and earth,” says a writer of that day, “for he has tumbled more saints out of Paradise than any ten Popes have put there.” A witty priest remarked that whenever Doctor de Launoi came into his parish he made profound reverences to him, for fear he should take away his St. Roch. A country magnate begged him not to harm St. Yon, the patron saint of one of his villages. “How shall I do him any harm,” said the *Dénicheur*, “since I have not the honor to know him?” On another occasion he declared that he did not turn out of heaven the blessed whom God had placed there, but only those whom ignorance and error had slipped in. He held “a Monday” at his house for the discussion of saintly claims and traditions, when he made such havoc of favorite saints, male and female, and turned into ridicule so many pious and romantic fictions, that Louis XIV. asked him to discontinue those assemblies. Witty and gay churchmen laughed at his honest zeal; the king feared it; and so the beginning of reform within the church could not go far.

All this was “in the air” while Voltaire was a little boy at his father’s house; and during the whole forming period of his life he lived in the very thick of it. He had also an elder brother in Paris, who made conscientious living ridiculous and offensive.

¹ Siècle de Louis XIV., chap. xxxv.

CHAPTER V.

AT SCHOOL.

THE boy remained at home three years after his mother's death, with his father, sister, and elder brother, instructed in a desultory way by the Abbé Châteauneuf. The family lived liberally and with some elegance, enjoying, as documents attest, a large garden, a summer residence in a suburban village, with a farm adjacent, horses, vehicles, books, an ample income, consideration, and a circle of agreeable friends, whom these alone never command. "I wrote verses from my cradle," Voltaire remarks more than once, and Duvernet adds that Armand Arouet also wrote them, even while both were boys at home. The family, he says, used to amuse themselves by pitting the brothers against one another in verse-making, and the verses of the younger were so good as at first to please and afterwards to alarm his father, who was a man of judgment, and dreaded the development of so unprofitable a talent.

Maître Arouet, like a true French father, had a scheme of life for each of his sons. The elder, as a matter of course, would follow his father's business of notary, and succeed by inheritance to his father's offices. For his younger son he cherished more ambitious views: he designed to make a solicitor or an advocate of him. A notary, in such practice as he enjoyed, would be almost a sufficient patron to a young advocate, and it would be both convenient and advantageous to have a lawyer in the family. We still hear of solicitors in London, in large practice, bringing up a son or a nephew as a barrister, because it is solicitors who choose barristers for their clients. There were also places open to the legal profession in France, procurable by purchase, by interest, or by a blending of the two, which led to the higher magistracy, if not to the court and cabinet of the king.

This father, it is evident, had set his heart upon seeing his younger son enter a career in which he could push him on to fortune with advantage to himself; and to this end he took precisely the course which an opulent father of his rank would adopt at the present time: he sent him to the great school of the day, — the Eton of France, — the Jesuit Collège Louis-le-Grand, attended then by two thousand boys of the most distinguished families in the kingdom. This school, which still exists upon its ancient site in the Rue St. Jacques, in the heart of old Paris, presented almost every attraction which could weigh with a fond or an ambitious parent. The Jesuits were in the highest credit with king, court, and hierarchy, and this school was among their most cherished and important institutions. Years before, when Louis XIV. visited it in state to witness a play performed by the pupils, he let fall an expression which gave it the name it bore, and brought it into the highest fashion. A spectator said, "Everything is admirable here." The king, hearing the remark, responded, "Certainly, it is my college." The next morning, before the dawn of day, the old name of "Collège of Clermont" had disappeared from the gate-way, and in its stead was placed a new name, "Collège Louis-le-Grand."

The urbane and scholarly Jesuits held this king in firm possession. That plain-spoken lady, Madame, mother of the Regent, tells us in her Memoirs that the priests had made the king believe all men damned except those whom Jesuits had instructed. If any one about the court, she adds, wished to ruin a man, he had only to call him a Huguenot or a Jansenist, and his business was done. Her son, the Duke of Orleans, desired to take a gentleman into his service who had been accused of Jansenism. "Why, nephew," said the king, "do you think of such a thing as receiving a Jansenist into your service?" The prince replied, "I can positively assure your majesty that he is no Jansenist. It is rather to be feared that he does not even believe in God." "Oh," said the king, "if that's all, and you give me your word he's no Jansenist, take him." It is doubtful if Maître Aronnet thought better of the Jansenists than the king, since his son Armand had come from their teaching a narrow and cheerless devotee.

It was in the autumn of 1704, a few weeks after the battle

of Blenheim, that François-Marie Arouet, aged ten years, was placed in this famous school. His home was within an easy walk of the miscellaneous aggregation of buildings belonging to the college in the Rue St. Jacques, on the southern side of the Seine; but his father, left a widower three years before, had given away his only daughter in marriage, and therefore entered his son among the boarders, five hundred in number.

The child was not turned loose among this great crowd of boys, to make his way as best he could. There were privileges which wealth could buy, and Maître Arouet provided for his son one of the most valuable of these. The price of board and tuition was four hundred francs a year; which entitled the pupil to no special care or comfort. A prince, or indeed any man who chose to pay the extra cost, could establish his son in a private room, and provide him with a servant and tutor; and there were usually thirty or forty boys in the college thus favored. The private rooms were in such request that it was necessary to speak for one of them years before it was wanted. There were thirty or forty larger rooms for groups of five, six, or seven pupils, each group under the care of a *préfet*, a priest, who served them as father and tutor, aiding them in their lessons, and keeping them from harm. It was in one of these groups that Maître Arouet placed his child, under the care of Father Thoulier, a young priest (twenty-two in 1704) of noted family and attainments. What better could a generous father do for a promising, motherless boy of ten in the Paris of 1704? Clad in a scholar's modest frock and cap, brown-haired, bright-eyed, not robust, already practiced in gay mockery of things revered, François Arouet took his place in that swarm of French boys of the Collège Louis-le-Grand. There he remained for seven years, and it was his only school.

We must think of it simply as a boys' school, not a college; a humming, bustling hive of boys, given to mischief, and liable to the most primitive punishments when detected in the same. It was while Voltaire was a pupil that the Duke de Boufflers and the Marquis d'Argenson conspired with other boys to blow a pop-gun volley of peas at the nose of the unpopular professor, Father Lejay, and were condemned to be flogged for the outrage. The marquis, a boy of seventeen,

the son of a king's minister, managed to escape; but the younger duke, though he was named "Governor of Flanders" and colonel of a regiment, was obliged to submit to the punishment. Voltaire, too, speaks of his *préfet* giving him and his comrades some slaps *sur les fesses* by way of amusement.¹ The discipline, however, was far from being severe, and there was evidently a friendly sympathy between pupils and teachers, which, in the case of Voltaire, survived school-days.

In no important particular did this school differ from a Jesuit school of the present moment, such as we may visit in Rome, Vienna, Montreal, New York. Sixty years after leaving it, Voltaire recalled to mind the picture, twelve feet square, which adorned one of its halls, of St. Ignatius and St. Xavier going to heaven in a resplendent chariot drawn by four white horses, the Father Eternal visible on high, wearing a beautiful white beard flowing to his waist, the Virgin and her Son by his side, the Holy Spirit beneath in the form of a dove, and a choir of angels waiting with joined hands and bowed heads to receive the illustrious fathers of the order.² He remembered, too, that if any one in France had presumed to ridicule this childish legend, the reverend Père la Chaise, confessor of the king, would have had the scoffer in the Bastille with promptitude. Just such pictures still hang in many a school, and the general view of the universe intended to be inculcated by them is not materially changed. But the Bastille is gone, and the power of Père la Chaise is diminished.

The boy took his place in the lowest class, the sixth, and began his *Rosa, la Rose*, in the crabbed old "Rudimenta" of Despautères, written in Latin, and stuffed with needless difficulties of the good old-fashioned kind. At many schools a better book was used, written in French, and every way more suitable; but no Jesuit of that generation would adopt it because it was written by the Fathers of Port Royal, odious Jansenists! In Greek he was given a little book of easy sentences, by Jean Stobée, a compiler who lived in the fourth century; and this was followed, in his second year, by a selection of Æsop's Fables. Early in the course he was set to reading the Latin poems of Father Commire, who put into such

¹ 88 Œuvres de Voltaire, 261.

² 55 Œuvres de Voltaire, 280.

hexameters as he could command the stories of Jonah, Daniel, and the Immaculate Conception, for the edification of youth; also, some pompous eulogies of the Virgin Mary. And so he worked his way up through all the classes, meeting every day similar incongruities, at the recollection of which he laughed all his life: Epictetus one hour, and St. Basil's Homilies the next; now Lucian, now St. Chrysostom; Virgil in the morning, Commire in the afternoon; Cicero alternating with Father Lejay's Latin Life of Joseph; Sallust followed by a Psalm of David, in what he calls "kitchen Latin;" the college course being that wondrous mixture of the two Romes — Cicero's Rome and the Pope's Rome, both imperial — which for ages constituted polite education. The teachers were amiable and worthy gentlemen, who did the best they knew for their pupils. It merely happened that they now had a pupil in whom the ingredients would not mix.

The most gifted boy, in the most favorable circumstances, can only make a fair beginning of education from ten to seventeen. Voltaire, at the end of his course, could not have entered such universities as Oxford, Cambridge, Berlin, and Harvard are now. He may have had Latin enough, but not half enough Greek; no modern language but his own; scarcely any tincture of mathematics; no modern history; no science; not even a tolerable outline of geography. The school-books still held to the ancient theory that rivers were formed by the ocean running into deep caverns under the mountains; and if any of the fathers had yet heard of the new astronomy of Professor Isaac Newton (adopted at Oxford in 1704, Voltaire's first year at school), they had heard of it only to reject it as heresy. He did not learn the most remarkable events even of French history, unless he learned them out of class. "I did not," he intimates, "know that Francis I. was taken prisoner at Pavia, nor where Pavia was; the very land of my birth was unknown to me. I knew neither the constitution nor the interests of my country; not a word of mathematics, not a word of sound philosophy. I learned Latin and nonsense."¹

We have a work upon education by Jouveney, a Jesuit father of that generation, in which no mention is made of geography, history, mathematics, or science. Much Latin,

¹ 54 *Œuvres de Voltaire*, 209.

a little Greek, and plenty of what Voltaire called nonsense (*sottises*) made up the mental diet of the pupils of the Collège Louis-le-Grand.

The main strength of the worthy fathers was expended in teaching their pupils to use words with effect and grace. The nonsense (*les sottises*) was a necessity of their time and vocation. Grave and learned men could still gravely and learnedly discourse upon the grades of angels, the precise difference between a "throne" and a "dominion," the language employed by Adam and Eve, the parents of Melchisedech, and the spot whence Enoch had been translated to heaven. Boys could not escape such *sottises*; but in a fashionable school of the learned and courtly Jesuits they were taught with more of formality and routine than among Jansenist orders, who were rude enough to take such things seriously.

Literary skill was what this boy acquired at school, and scarcely any other good thing. He studied and loved Virgil, his "idol and master." He studied and loved Horace, the model of much of his maturest verse. He loved to recall, in later years, the happy hour when, as a school-boy, he came upon that passage of Cicero's oration on behalf of the poet Archias, which has been a favorite sentence with school-boys for many a century: "Studies nourish youth, cheer old age, adorn prosperity, console adversity, delight at home, are no impediment abroad, remain with us through the night, accompany us when we travel, and go with us into the country." In a letter to Madame du Châtelet, written in the first warmth of their affection, he speaks of having often repeated to her those words, which, he says, he early adopted as his own.¹ He speaks more than once, in his letters, of his boyish sensibility to the charms of poetry,—his first passion and his last. Hebrew he mentions having tried in vain to learn. In a letter of 1767, in repudiating the doctrine of the natural equality of minds, he adduces his own incapacities: "As early as my twelfth year I was aware of the prodigious number of things for which I had no talent. I knew that my organism was not formed to go very far in mathematics. I have proved that I have no capacity for music. God has said to each man, Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther. I had some natural power

¹ 5 Œuvres de Voltaire, 112.

to acquire modern languages; none for the Oriental. We cannot all do all things." ¹

His teachers seemed chosen to nourish his reigning tastes. Father Thoulier, his tutor, known afterwards as Abbé d'Olivet, was one of the most enthusiastic and accomplished Latinists in Europe, his translations of Cicero remaining classic to this day in France. He spent a long life in the study of Roman literature, his love for which had originally drawn him into the order, against the wishes of his family. "Read Cicero! Read Cicero!" he exclaimed in a public address; and these words, as one of his biographers remarks, were the moral of his life. He could almost have added, "Read nothing but Cicero!" He was a familiar, genial teacher, whom Voltaire, half a century later, used to address as "my dear Cicero;" and the abbé would return the compliment by telling his pupil that he was tired of men, and passed his days "with a Virgil, a Terence, a Molière, a Voltaire." In his latest years he became a kind of literary bigot, vaunting his favorite authors and reviling the favorites of others. He was in the ardor and buoyancy of youth when he breathed into this susceptible boy the love of Cicero, and gave him familiar slaps by way of amusement.

But the *préfet* only saw him safely to the door of the classrooms. His chief professor of Latin was Father Porée, whose labor of love was to write Latin plays for the boys to perform, some of which are still occasionally presented in French schools.² M. Pierron declares that he shall not to his dying day forget the "prodigious *ennui*" that he endured in reading these productions, characterized, as he remarks, by inanity

¹ 2 Lettres Inédites de Voltaire, 560.

² One of the Latin plays of Father Porée was performed at Boston, Mass., at the Commencement of Boston College, June 27, 1877. It was called Philedonus, or the Romance of a Poor Young Man, the argument of which was given thus: While pursuing his studies in Paris, Philedonus neglects his religious duties, and yields to the fascinations of the luxurious capital. Learning that his friend, Erastus, is dangerously ill, Philedonus becomes the victim of melancholy, and no longer listens to the voice of the tempter. Through the salutary influence of a heavenly vision, in which his mother and a guardian angel appear, and partially arouse the long-dormant energies of his better nature, the student resolves to amend. Various circumstances—among others the dying curse of Erastus—strengthen the good resolutions of Philedonus, who at length escapes from the toils of parasites plotting to effect his ruin, reforms his companions, and returns to his home in Italy.

of conception, absence of interest, puerility of style, and jests in bad taste.¹ They were, however, sufficient for their purpose, and gave the author a great reputation. He was a handsome, imposing, fluent, and agreeable man, who knew how to hold his classes attentive, and to adorn the platform on state occasions. Voltaire speaks of Father Porée with respect and fondness thirty years after leaving school, when his old master was at the head of the college.

It was Father Porée who said of the boy that "he loved to weigh in his little scales the great interests of Europe;" which calls to mind a remark of his own, written half a century later: "In my infancy I knew a canon of Péronne, aged ninety-two, who was reared by one of the most infuriate commoners of The League. He always said [in speaking of the assassin of Henry IV.], '*the late Monsieur de Ravallac.*'"² Being at a Jesuit college, he could not fail to hear something, from time to time, of the wondrous attempts of the Jesuits in Canada, made familiar to modern readers through the works of Dr. Francis Parkman. He even knew a M. Brébeuf, grand-nephew of that Father Brébeuf, martyr, bravest of the brave, whom Dr. Parkman has so nobly delineated in his "Jesuits in North America." Voltaire heard from M. Brébeuf an anecdote that may have come from the missionary's lips: "He told me that his grand-uncle, the Jesuit, having converted a pretty little Canadian boy, the tribe, much offended, roasted the child, ate him, and gave a choice portion [*une fesse*] to the reverend Father Brébeuf, who, to get out of the scrape, said it was a fast with him that day."³

From such slight indications as these we can infer that, little as the fathers may have formally taught him of modern history, he was not inattentive to the events of his time, and gained some knowledge of the heroic ages of France.

A comrade of Porée was Father Tournemine, an inmate of the Collège Louis-le-Grand, though not officially connected with it. He conducted a monthly magazine for the Jesuits, a kind of repository of historical memoirs and pious miscellany. He was a doting lover of such literature as he liked, a man of

¹ Voltaire et ses Maitres, page 77.

² 58 Œuvres de Voltaire, 7. .

³ 37 Œuvres de Voltaire, 146.

the world, a genial, easy companion to young and old, and held in high esteem in the college as literary ornament and arbiter. Between this editor and young Arouet there grew an attachment which lasted many years beyond the college course of the boy, and influenced both their lives. "While his comrades," says Duvernet, "strengthened their constitutions, though thinking only of amusing themselves, in games, races, and other bodily exercises, Voltaire withdrew from the playground to go and strengthen his mind in conversation with Fathers Tournemine and Porée, with whom he passed most of his leisure; and he was accustomed to say to those who rallied him upon his indifference to the pleasures natural to his age, 'Every one jumps and every one amuses himself in his own way.'"

It so chanced that Tournemine was as strenuous a partisan of Corneille as Abbé Châteauneuf was of Racine, whom the Jesuits held to be a Jansenist, and therefore neither poet nor Christian. "In my infancy," says Voltaire, in his edition of Corneille, "Father Tournemine, a Jesuit, an extreme partisan of Corneille, and an enemy of Racine, whom he deemed a Jansenist, made me remark this passage [Agesilaus to Lysander], which he preferred to all the pieces of Racine." The passage amply justifies the remark which the commentator adds: "Thus prejudice corrupts the taste, as it perverts the judgment, in all the concerns of life."¹ Nevertheless, that very prejudice of the amiable Jesuit may have served the pupil as a provocative; and we can easily fancy this boy defending his favorite dramatist against the attacks of the fathers, aiming at them the arguments he had heard at home from his mentor, Abbé Châteauneuf.

In a large school there must be, of course, the unpopular teacher, who is not always the least worthy one. Father Lejay, professor of rhetoric of many years' standing, filled this "rôle" in the Collège Louis-le-Grand. He was a strict, zealous, disagreeable formalist; "a good Jesuit," devoted to his order, who composed and compiled many large volumes, still to be seen in French libraries; a dull, plodding, ambitious man, with an ingredient in his composition of that quality which has given to the word *Jesuit* its peculiar meaning in

¹ 67 Œuvres de Voltaire, 301.

modern languages. He wrote a book of pious sentences for Every Day of the Week, and a discourse upon the "Triumph of Religion under Louis XIV." He translated and annotated the "Roman Antiquities" of Denys of Halicarnassus, compiled a vast work upon rhetoric, wrote upon the "Duties of a Christian with Regard to Faith and Conduct," wrote tragedies and comedies in Latin and in French, which were played at the college by the boys, with the "success" that invariably attends such performances. These dramas of the professor of rhetoric, which are described by a French explorer as among the curiosities of inanity, reveal the interesting fact that Father Lejay had a particular antipathy to "philosophers," and knew very well how to flatter Louis XIV. by abusing them. He was indeed much given to politic flattery, each of his works being dedicated to some great man of the hour whom his order or himself was interested to conciliate.

Plays were often performed at this school. One of the first comedies presented after the entrance of François Arouet was Lejay's "Damocles," in which the friend of Dionysius is held up to scorn as a "philosopher," and the tyrant is presented to the admiration of the auditors as an ancient Louis XIV. Damocles is remarkable for the flowing amplitude of his beard, in which his foolish soul delights, and his favorite saying is, "Nations will never be happy until kings become philosophers, or philosophers kings." The king says, at length, "Very well, be it so; reign in my place." Damocles reigns. He commits every imbecile folly which the crude mind of Father Lejay could imagine or boys laugh at. The people rise against the "philosopher," and recall Dionysius, who tears the royal mantle from Damocles, and dooms him to lose his noble beard, more precious to him than life. The crowning scene is the last, in which a barber, with abundant ceremony and endless comic incident, cuts off the beard, amid applause that shook the solid walls of the college.¹ It was only with Father Lejay that the young Arouet was not in pleasant accord during the seven years of his school life. The anecdote of their collision, vaguely related by Duvernet, came doubtless from Voltaire himself, even to some of the words which Duvernet employs in telling it:—

¹ Voltaire et ses Maîtres, page 108.

“ Among the professors, who were very much attached to him, Father Lejay, a man of mediocre ability, vain, jealous, and held in little esteem by his colleagues, was the only one whose good-will Voltaire could not win. He was professor of eloquence, and, like most of those who plume themselves upon that gift, he was very little eloquent. He was regarded as the Cotin¹ of orators. Voltaire had with him some literary discussions; the master felt himself humiliated by his pupil, and this was the source of that antipathy which Father Lejay had for Voltaire,— a feeling which he could not conquer, nor even disguise. One day, the pupil, exasperated by the professor, gave him a retort of a certain kind, which ought not to have been provoked, and which it had been discreet in the instructor not to notice. Father Lejay, in his rage, descends from his platform, runs to him, seizes him by the collar, and, rudely shaking him, cries out several times, ‘ Wretch! You will one day be the standard-bearer of deism in France!’ ”

Such a scene would not, in that age, have injured the audacious boy in the opinion of his comrades. It might even have made him the hero of a day; for it was of this period that Madame of Orleans wrote, when she entered in her diary, “ Religious belief is so completely extinct in this country that one seldom meets a young man who does not wish to pass himself off as an atheist. But the oddest part of it is that the very person who professes atheism in Paris plays the saint at court.”

¹ A pompous and arrogant court preacher of Louis XIII.'s time, satirized by Boileau and Molière.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SCHOOL POET.

ALL things pressed this boy toward the path he was to follow. Every influence to which he was subjected, whether within or without the college, stimulated the development of his peculiar aptitudes.

In the France of Louis XIV. there were five illustrious names that did not belong to men of rank in church or state, and they were all the names of poets: Corneille, Racine, Molière, Boileau, and J. B. Rousseau. These alone of the commoners of France could be supposed worthy to be guests at great houses, and sit with princes in the king's presence. These five: Corneille, a lawyer's son; Racine and Boileau, sons of small placemen; Molière, the son of a Paris upholsterer; J. B. Rousseau, the child of the Arouet family's shoemaker. The boy Rousseau may have carried home shoes to the notary's house; but the proudest head in France was proud to bow to Rousseau the poet. The diaries of that generation attest the estimation in which the verse-making art was held, and the great number of persons who tried their hands at it. Verse was the one road to glory open to nameless youth, the career of arms being an exclusive preserve of feudal rank.

We have seen that the professors with whom this lad had most to do wrote plays in prose and in verse. The performance of those works on the great days of the school year absorbed such an amount of time and toil that we might suppose the college a training-school of actors. There was the little drama and the grand drama: the first consisting of farces and burlesques, in Latin or in French, or in both; the second of tragedies, in Latin. The little drama was presented in one of the college halls a few days before the end of the school year, and was witnessed only by the inmates;

the plays being short, the comic effects simple, and the mounting inexpensive. The grand drama, reserved for the final day, when the prizes were given, — the solemn day of judgment of a French school, — was given in the great court of the college, converted for the occasion into a vast tent. The play was usually in five acts, and “entire months” were employed in drilling the young performers, rehearsing the play, and preparing the scenes. The stage was set up at the further end of the court, opposite the great gate-way, and the interior was all gay with banners, flags, streamers, tapestry, emblems, devices, and mottoes. The families of the pupils were invited, and places of honor were reserved for the chiefs of the Jesuit order, for bishops and archbishops, and for members of the royal family; the king himself being sometimes present. The five-act Latin play, on some subject of classic antiquity, was the prelude to the great event of the occasion, the distribution of the prizes; and as the performers were generally the boys who were to receive prizes, it was a day of intoxicating glory to them, the applause bestowed upon the actor being renewed and emphasized when he stood up to receive the public recognition of a year’s good conduct. On some occasions there was a mock trial, and the reading of poems composed by the pupils. The acting of charades was also a part of the school festivities, and they were performed very much as we do them now at holiday times, although with more formality.¹

If these provocatives to literature were not sufficient, there were Literary Societies in the institution, not unlike those of American colleges at the present time. These were styled in the Jesuit schools of that period “Academies;” and, as the Jesuits invented them, no reader needs to be told that the sessions were presided over by one of the father professors. In other respects, there was no material difference between the Academy for which François Arouet composed and declaimed and any Gamma-Delta society of an American college of the present time. The members debated, read poems of their own composition, declaimed those of others, and did all those acts and things which readers remember as part of their own joyous school experience. The tradition of the college is that

¹ Voltaire et ses Maîtres, page 28, etc.

the violent scene with Father Lejay, just related, occurred, not in class, as Duvernet has it, but during a debate in the Academy, Lejay presiding.

Thus stimulated to productivity young Arouet soon became, and to the end of his course remained, the prodigy of the Collège Louis-le-Grand. Some of his early spurts of verse have been preserved. Father Porée, being surprised one day by the end of the hour, and having no time to dictate a theme, hastily said, as the bell summoned the class away, "Make Nero speak at the moment when he is about to kill himself." The boy handed in these lines:—

"De la mort d'une mère exécrable complice,
Si je meurs de ma main, je l'ai bien mérité;
Et, n'ayant jamais fait qu'actes de cruauté,
J'ai voulu, me tuant, en faire un de justice."¹

On another occasion, in the same class, he amused himself by throwing up and catching a snuff-box. Father Porée took it from him, and required him to redeem it by composing some verses. He produced the following:—

SUR UNE TABATIÈRE CONFISQUÉE.

Adieu, ma pauvre tabatière ;
Adieu, je ne te verrai plus ;
Ni soins, ni larmes, ni prière,
Ne te rendront à moi ; mes efforts sont perdus.
Adieu, ma pauvre tabatière ;
Adieu, doux fruit de mes écus !
S'il faut à prix d'argent te racheter encore,
J'irai plutôt vider les trésors de Plutus.
Mais ce n'est pas ce dieu que l'on veut que j'implore ;
Pour te revoir, hélas ! il faut prier Phébus.
Qu'on oppose entre nous une forte barrière !
Me demander des vers ! hélas ! je n'en puis plus.
Adieu, ma pauvre tabatière ;
Adieu, je ne te verrai plus.²

¹ Of the death of a mother the execrable accomplice, if I die by my own hand, I have deserved it well ; and, having until now done only acts of cruelty, I have wished, in killing myself, to do one of justice.

² UPON A CONFISCATED SNUFF-BOX.

Adieu, my poor snuff-box ; adieu, I shall never see thee more ; nor pains, nor tears, nor prayer will give thee back to me ; my efforts are lost. Adieu, my poor snuff-box ; adieu, sweet fruit of my crowns. If money was the price of thy redemption, I would rather go and empty the treasury of Pluto. But it is not that god whom I am required to implore. To get a sight of thee again, I must, alas ! address a prayer to Phœbus. What an obstacle is interposed between us ! To ask verses of me ! Alas ! I can produce no more of them. Adieu, my poor snuff-box ; I shall never see thee more.

Other light verses, composed in his earlier school years, have been preserved ; but these will suffice to show that, while still a child, he had a degree of the literary tact of which he was afterwards a master. As if to make amends to Father Lejay, he translated into French verse a Latin poem of that professor, of a hundred lines or more, upon Sainte Geneviève, always a very popular saint in Paris, even to this day. The poem is of the purest orthodoxy. A more popular effort among his comrades was a translation into four French lines of an old Latin stanza upon bell-ringers, in which the poet gives utterance to a desire, common to students, that the rope held in the hand of the ringer might be twisted around his neck.

It is not possible to fix the date of these poems, but we are sure of one thing : before he was eleven years of age, and before he had been at school a year, he was recognized and shown as a wonder of precocious talent. We are sure of this, because it was in the character of a wondrous boy-poet that Abbé Châteauneuf presented him to a personage still more wondrous, Mademoiselle Ninon de Lenclos, then in her ninetyeth year, but still the centre of a brilliant circle. She died in October, 1705, when François Arouet was not quite eleven years of age. Ladies of the highest rank, we are assured, paid court to this anomalous being, and besought her, even in extreme old age, to "form" their sons by permitting them to frequent her evening parties. An uncomely young dandy having boasted that he had been "formed" by her, she said, "I am like God, who repented that he had made man." Molière consulted her upon his comedies, and caught from her conversation some traits of his masterpiece, *Tartuffe*. She lived in elegance and luxury all her days, courted by the courted, admired by the admired, envied by the envied, sung by poets, loved by priests, reprobated, so far as we can perceive, by no one.

And who was Ninon de Lenclos? She was a country beauty, the child of gentle parents: her mother a good Catholic ; her father a "philosopher" of the sect of Epicurus, who taught her early that there ought not to be one moral law for the male of our species, and another for the female. She believed him, and inferred that there was no moral law for either. At seventeen she became the mistress of the Cardinal

de Richelieu, who gave her a pension for life of two thousand francs a year, a competence at that period, upon which she set up in the vocation of *Épicurienne*. Ninon was "an honest man," says a French writer, "because she only had one lover at a time." But she changed them so suddenly that she was unable herself to decide a claim to the paternity of one of her children, and the two contestants decided the matter by a cast of the dice. The boy who thus won a father rose to high rank in the French navy, and died in battle.

An anecdote more astounding is related of her by Voltaire, who doubtless heard it from the Abbé de Châteauneuf. Near the gate St. Antoine there was a restaurant, much frequented by "honest people," like Mademoiselle de Lenclos and her abbé. One evening, after supper there, a young man of nineteen, who had been one of the party, met her in the garden, and made such importunate love to her that she was obliged to tell him that she was his mother. The young man, who had come to the place on horseback, took a pistol from his holsters and shot himself dead in the garden. This tragic event made her "a little more serious," but it did not change her way of life, nor lower her in the regard of her friends.

She was a strict observer of the proprieties of life, took such care of her fortune as to quadruple the income her first lover assigned her, and gradually drew around her the most agreeable and distinguished people in the kingdom, — ladies as well as men. For seventy years she held her ground: admired at first for her beauty, grace, and hereditary musical gifts; admired later for her "prudence," her "judgment," her good nature, her social talents, and her sure taste in literature. She is said to have held in contempt and abhorrence certain foibles occasionally noticed in other women, such as falsehood, jealousy, malice, and ill-temper. Friendship she deemed a precious and sacred thing; but as to love, she looked upon it, says Voltaire, as a mere pastime, imposing no moral obligations; and it was her boast that her lovers remained her friends and the friends of one another. The father of the young man who shot himself abandoned Madame de Maintenon (afterwards the king's wife) to pay court to Ninon, and yet madame remained her friend, and pressed her to come and live in the palace, and help amuse her unamusable old king. She used to say that she had never offered but one prayer,

“My God, make me an honest man, but never an honest woman.”¹

All this being scarcely conceivable by us, it were of no avail to enlarge upon it. To feel the full force of the contrast between the social laws of two contemporary communities, both called Christian, we have only to reflect that this was the period assigned by Hawthorne to the incidents of the “Scarlet Letter.”

She was “as dry as a mummy” when the little poet was taken to see her, — “a wrinkled, decrepit creature, who had nothing upon her bones but a yellow skin that was turning black.” He gives this account of their meeting: —

“I had written some verses, which were of no value, but seemed very good for my age. Mademoiselle de Lenclos had formerly known my mother, who was much attached to the Abbé de Châteauneuf; and thus it was found a pleasant thing to take me to see her. The abbé was master of her house; it was he who had finished the amorous history of that singular person. He was one of those men who do not require the attraction of youth in women; and the charms of her society had upon him the effect of beauty. She made him languish two or three days; and the abbé having asked her why she had held out so long, she replied that she had wished to wait until her birthday for so beautiful a gala; and on that day she was just seventy. She did not carry the jest very far, and the Abbé de Châteauneuf remained her intimate friend. For my part, I was presented to her a little later; she was then eighty-five [eighty-nine]. It pleased her to put me in her will; she left me two thousand francs to buy books with. Her death occurred soon after my visit.”

This legacy, which, as Voltaire more than once records, was punctually paid, confirms the version of the Abbé Duvernet, who says that the aged Ninon was delighted with the boy. Her house, in the Rue des Tournelles, was, he assures us, “a school of good breeding, and the rendezvous of philosophers and wits, whom she knew how to please and interest even in her decrepitude.” All pleased her in the lad, — his confidence, his repartees, and, above all, his information. She questioned him upon the topic of the day, — the deadly feud between the sincere, austere Jansenists and the politic, scholarly Jesuits, then approaching its climax in the destruction of Port Royal. Doubtless he had his little say upon that subject, and

¹ 63 Œuvres de Voltaire, 163.

spoke in the "decided tone" which the abbé mentions. Ninon, he remarks, "saw in him the germ of a great man; and it was to warm that germ into life that she left him the legacy to buy books, — a gift at once the most flattering and the most useful to a young man whose sole passion was to instruct himself."

The legacy was indeed most flattering. What a stimulus to a susceptible boy of eleven, already conscious of his powers, and living in the midst of a society who assumed that the composition of good French verse was among the most glorious of all possible feats of the mind! The next year, being in the fifth class, he began a tragedy upon the story, told in Livy, of Amulius, king of Alba, the wicked uncle of those babes in the woods, Romulus and Remus. He called his play "Amulius and Numitor." He kept it many years among his papers, but threw it at length into the fire.

While still in the fifth class his fame reached the court. An invalid soldier, who had served under the immediate command of the king's only son and heir, came to the college one day, and asked the regent to write for him a petition in verse to the prince for aid in his sickness and poverty. The regent referred him to Arouet, who wrote twenty lines for him in half an hour. He made the old soldier address the prince as "the worthy son of the greatest of kings," his love, the people's hope, "who, without reigning over France, reigned over the hearts of the French." "Will you permit me," ran the petition, "to present a new year's gift to you, who only receive them from the hand of the gods? At your birth, they say, Mars gave you valor, Minerva wisdom, Apollo beauty; but a god more powerful, whom in my anguish I implore, designed to bestow new year gifts upon me in giving you liberality." The petition brought a few golden louis to the soldier, and made some little noise at Versailles and Paris. It is said also to have renewed the alarm of his father, lest so much flattery bestowed upon a casual exertion of his son's talents should lure him from the path which leads to rich clients and liberal fees. This versified petition was the best of his school poems that has been preserved, and was really turned with much elegance and ingenuity. For a boy of twelve to devise a compliment for Louis XIV. or his race, after half a century of incense, that should attract a moment's attention from king or court must certainly be accounted a kind of triumph.

He did not neglect the ordinary studies of the school. At the close of his sixth year, in August, 1710, on the day of the distribution of prizes, he enjoyed extraordinary honors. Prize after prize, crown after crown (if we may believe tradition), was awarded him, until he was covered with crowns and staggered under the weight of his prize books. Among the guests in the grand pavilion was the poet J. B. Rousseau, then in the prime of manhood, the lustre of his fame undimmed. The name of François-Marie Arouet caught his ear, and he asked one of the fathers if the lad was the son of Maître Arouet, of the Chamber of Accounts, whom he knew. The professor said he was, and that he had shown for some years a marvelous talent for poetry. Then the professor took the boy by the hand, all covered with crowns and laden with glory, and presented him to the poet. Rousseau kissed him on both cheeks, as the French do at such times, congratulated him warmly upon the honors he had received, and foretold for him a brilliant future. The scholar, with equal enthusiasm, threw his arms around the poet's neck, amid the emotion and applause of the assembly.

And so he went on, triumphantly and happily, to the end of his seven years' course; a good scholar, a favorite of his teachers, admired by all his companions, and by some of them beloved. His friends at school remained his friends as long as they lived, and some of them lived to witness and to solace his last days. The warmest, tenderest, and longest friendships of his life were formed at the Collège Louis-le-Grand, and his instructors followed his career with interest and pride, despite the human foibles and the French faults that marred it. There is no question that his life at school was happy and honorable, and both in a high degree. He made the most of his chances there, such as they were.

These seven years, so brilliant and so fortunate for him in the safe seclusion of a school, were the darkest France had known since the time of Jeanne Darc; for it was then that the French people had to pay large installments of the penalty of enduring for half a century an ignorant and incompetent king. The defeat of Blenheim, in Arouet's first year at school, was followed by that of Ramilies in 1706, while he was writing his tragedy upon the bad uncle of Romulus and Remus. Defeat

followed defeat, until in 1709 occurred the crowning disaster of Malplaquet. There were times, as this boy remembered, when Paris itself dreaded the victor's approach; and he never forgot the famine of 1709, when, besides the catastrophe of Malplaquet, the olives failed, the fruit trees were nipped by frost, the harvest was ruined, the British fleet captured the grain ships coming from the East, and the cold of the winter was extreme. His father had to pay a hundred francs extra for him at the college that year, and yet he had to eat brown bread. Probably he meant oaten bread, which Madame de Maintenon set the example of eating at Versailles. The king sent to the mint that year four hundred thousand francs' worth of gold plate, and there was a general melting of silver plate from great houses.

The old king had his share of sorrow and humiliation. It was in April, 1711, young Arouet's last year at school, that the series of deaths began in the royal family, the mere recollection of which, many years after, brought tears to susceptible French eyes. The king's only son, the dauphin, died of small-pox in that month. The next February *his* son, the new dauphin, died; and, three weeks after, *his* son, leaving to France only a boy of two years, "within two fingers of death," who became Louis XV. Paris saw father, mother, and son all borne to the tomb in the same hearse. The hardest hearts, the wisest heads, forgave the stricken king for the woes unnumbered he had brought upon his country through his subservience to priests. Our young student, when he came, half a century later, to treat of these events, in his "Age of Louis XIV.," wrote, "This time of desolation left in the hearts of men an impression so profound that, during the minority of Louis XV., I knew several persons who could not speak of these losses without tears."¹

He remembered, also, that at the period when Marlborough seemed about to come thundering at the gates of Paris, the minds of men were distracted by what seem to us trifling religious disputes. But at that time nothing was trifling that savored of religion, for behind it all there was the dungeon, the torture-chamber, the bayonet, the axe, the wheel, the fagot. He remembered that, about the time when he was crowned and applauded in the presence of Rousseau, a Jewess and her daugh-

¹ 26 Œuvres de Voltaire, 376.

ter were burned at Lisbon for some trivial act of eating lamb at the season when priests said meat must not be eaten. The story circulated in the school that the girl was ravishingly beautiful, but he declares that it was not her beauty that drew the tears from his eyes when he heard the tale.

And at that very time, perhaps at the moment when the young poet heard his name called in the splendid pavilion, the light of victory may have gleamed in the eyes of every Jesuit in Paris on account of the destruction of the convent of Port Royal, near Versailles. The fundamental article of religion with Louis XIV. was the royal authority, and hence he regarded heresy as rebellion. Long he hesitated before proceeding to extremities with the Jansenist ladies of Port Royal in the Fields, so renowned were they for piety and good works, so revered by the solid men of Paris. But his confessor, Teller, gave him no peace, and the bewildered old king sent a confidential servant of his household to the convent to see what manner of persons its inmates were. "By my faith, sire," said the man on his return, "I saw there nothing but saints, male and female." The king sighed, and said nothing. The confessor, divining his thought, assured him that there was nothing in the world so dangerous as the virtues with which the poison of heresy was frequently covered. The fatal order was given. The ladies were distributed among the convents of the kingdom, and their abode was utterly destroyed, so that not one stone remained upon another.¹

Young Arouet could not escape a knowledge of these events, so dear to every Jesuit. In the very street in which his college was situated there was the Abbey of Port Royal of Paris, a kindred establishment to the one near Versailles. He lived close to these events, and was old enough to feel the infinite frivolity of the dispute which a priest could use as a pretext for such atrocities. During his last year at school, 1711, he may have seen men digging up the bones of the eminent persons buried near the destroyed convent, and conveying them to a village church-yard near by; and, during his whole school life, the soldiers of the king were hunting Protestants in the mountains of Cévennes for magistrates to break upon the wheel, to hang upon gibbets, to put to the torture, and burn at the stake.

¹ Mémoires Secrets, par Duclos.

CHAPTER VII.

WILD OATS.

AFTER the poetry of school comes the prose of life. Youth, young companions, zealous and friendly teachers, mental food composed chiefly of the sweets and dainties of three or four literatures, render school and college a land of enchantment, compared with which the ordinary life of man, with its unromantic duties and jostling indifference, seems at first a cheerless highway. It seems such even to an ordinary student, who has won no crowns, written no verses, and had no legacy left him by a famous personage. But this boy was the young Voltaire, who, at ten, had gone from a notary's abode to associate familiarly for seven years with the sons of grand seigneurs, colonels and governors from their cradles, and destined to all kinds of alluring brilliancies. And he had gained a kind of triumph over them. He had discovered that he had something within him which could hold its own, in favorable circumstances, against stars and titles.

- In August, 1711, when he left school, he was nearly seventeen, tall for his age, not handsome, having only one decided beauty, — brilliant, piercing eyes, which strangers always remarked. The Jesuit fathers took great pains to form the manners of their pupils, and this lad had profited by it. He was always nice in his person and in his personal habits, particular to have about him the more elegant conveniences of the toilette, and keenly alive to the importance of being agreeable. The flashing quickness of his mind rendered his conversation at all times interesting, and gave him a talent for repartee which the French at that time excessively over-valued. From his twelfth to his eighty-fourth year he was a sayer of smart things that minister to the necessities of the vast multitude who are indebted to their memory for their jests.

The vacation over, Maître Arouet pressed his son to think of a profession. "I desire none," said the youth, "except that of literature." The father replied, "Literature is the profession of a man who wishes to be useless to society, a burden to his relations, and to die of hunger."¹ The rest of the family sided with the father in combating the young man's choice; and, at that moment, the very servants in his father's kitchen may have joined in dissuading him. "The affair of the couplets" had broken out in Paris, covering literature itself with opprobrium, and overwhelming with shame and ruin one of its most illustrious living ornaments, the poet J. B. Rousseau. From being the favorite of princes, ladies, and bishops, he had suddenly come to naught, and had fled from Paris, never to return to it in honor. Strange to say, there was involved in his peril and disgrace a cobbler's apprentice, the son of Maître Arouet's charwoman. It was a childish business; but, under a "paternal government," an affair too trivial for mention may become terrible and desolating.

Some scandalous, vituperative couplets had been mysteriously dropped in a noted café much frequented by the literary men whom the couplets assailed. Rousseau, suspected of having written them, accused Joseph Saurin, a teacher of mathematics in the neighborhood, and made out so strong a case against him that he was arrested and held for trial. But Saurin was an able and resolute man, with powerful friends, and he defended himself with so much skill and effect as to secure his own release and Rousseau's arraignment. One of Saurin's witnesses was the boy just mentioned, who had been employed to convey some of the couplets to the coffee-house, — a task in which he had been assisted by a little shoe-black. The terror of the mother, on hearing of her son's arrest, was extreme, and she deafened all the quarter with her outcries, saying that her son would be hanged. François Arouet, as it chanced, was at home; the outbreak having occurred in the vacation following his scene with the poet. "Take comfort, my good woman," said he; "there is no hanging to be afraid of. Rousseau, a shoemaker's son, suborns a cobbler, who, you say, is the

¹ Duvernet, chapter iii.

accomplice of a shoe-black. All that does n't go above the ankle."

The case looked so black for Rousseau that he did not appear at his trial, and was consequently condemned as "contumacious," and sentenced to banishment and the confiscation of his goods. He was a ruined man.

On his death-bed he solemnly declared his innocence; and he probably was innocent of writing the couplets. Voltaire knew the truth, and drops intimations of it here and there in his writings. A knot of witty fellows, Saurin being one of them, who were in the habit of meeting for convivial purposes, amused themselves by writing personal couplets, which Rousseau *may* have been mischievous enough to bring to the notice of the subjects of them. This trivial affair, besides blasting the career of an exquisite poet, one of the glories of French literature, rent Paris into two impassioned factions, brought reproach upon literary pursuits, and remains to this day a discredit to all who were concerned in it.¹

Maître Arouet, the prudent father, and Armand Arouet, "my Jansenist of a brother," could both find argument in it against a literary career. Armand was then twenty-seven years of age, and, more a Jansenist than ever, carrying an extreme to an extreme. Our youth yielded to their united opposition; he was enrolled among the students of law in Paris, and attended the lectures. He also entered upon a course of lessons in geometry and metaphysics with Saurin, whose conduct in the affair of the couplets had given him a great increase of celebrity. For three years he studied under Saurin. He owns that he heard the geometer recite couplets against La Motte *like* those for which poor Rousseau was exiled.

A French student who now begins the study of the law buys for three francs a copy of the "Code Civil," a volume about as large as a pocket Testament, and as easy to understand as the Ten Commandments. Napoleon may have caught the idea of reducing French law to this simple form from a sentence in one of Voltaire's letters of 1739. "What disgusted me with the profession of advocate," he wrote, "was the profusion of useless things with which they wished to load

¹ See 35 Œuvres de Voltaire, 238, 240; 75 same, 517; 24^e same, 185; 63 same, 268; all contemporary memoirs; Factum, by Joseph Saurin.

my brain. TO THE POINT is my device." French law, in fact, was very much the same as English law and American law before the era of codifying and simplification. The old legal forms and customs, both French and English, were well adapted to their purpose of making justice expensive and lawyers indispensable. A glance at an old edition of Coke upon Lyttleton will convey a lively idea of the crabbed nature of the pursuit from which this young man instantly recoiled. But he had harder nuts than this to crack; at least, less attractive. "An advocate," he wrote half a century later, "is a man who, not having money enough to buy one of those brilliant offices upon which the universe has its eyes fixed (such as Counselor to the Salt Commissioners), studies for three years the laws of Theodosius and Justinian in order to know the practice of Paris, and who, being at last matriculated, has a right to plead for money, if he has a strong voice." To complete his disgust, the place in which the law school was held was repulsive, "a kind of barn," says Duvernet. "That country," remarks the same chronicler, "seemed to him barbarous and the laws a chaos." He continued to attend the classes, however, and may have even been admitted to practice.

Meanwhile, he was eighteen; he was François Arouet; he was in Paris; and he had an occupation which it was a pleasure to neglect.

Abbé de Châteauneuf did not live to see his pupil's later triumphs at the college. He died in 1709, but not before he had exhibited the young prodigy to certain votaries of verse and pleasure besides the incredible Ninon; among others to the Epicureans of the Temple, so frequently mentioned in the memoirs of that time. The Temple was what remained of the ancient monastery of the Templars, — a great square tower, with a smaller tower at each corner, where, in later times, Louis XVI. and his family were confined. Adjacent was the palace of the Grand Prior of France, Philippe Vendôme, one of the notorious voluptuaries of his generation, the last of the Vendômes, a ducal line descended from Henry IV. and one of his mistresses. The entire mass of building in the inclosure was called the Temple, but the ancient towers were then private property, and were let in suites to various tenants, the "Templars" of the age of Louis XIV.

If these people had had to choose a Madonna, a majority of them would have been likely to cast their votes for Ninon de Lenclos, whom they had known in her old age. The Grand Prior, who, besides enjoying the revenues of a prince, had rich benefices to bestow, lived only for pleasure, and had little notion of pleasure that was not sensual: "carried to bed every night for thirty years dead drunk," reports St. Simon. Years before, he had taken a fancy to the Abbé Chaulieu, poet and refined sensualist, to whom he had given abbey after abbey, until his income amounted to thirty thousand francs a year, for which the abbé rendered no service whatever, seldom going near one of his abbeys, but living always in a sumptuous abode within the Temple. This personage was never dead drunk, for he and most of the Templars valued themselves upon not lessening the sum-total of pleasure by vulgar excess. They wrote verses, gave elegant repasts, said witty things, cultivated the art of pleasing, observed the decorums, and practiced the vices. It is not necessary to know whether Paris exaggerated their immoralities, since there was at the base of their lives one immorality which sufficed to vitiate their whole existence: they wore the garb, shared the revenues, and enjoyed the honors of a church whose creed they despised and whose ordinances they disobeyed. Besides the churchmen, there were certain witty and dissolute noblemen who frequented the society of the Temple: the Marquis la Fare, more Bacchanalian than Epicurean, whose name is joined to that of Abbé de Chaulieu on the title-page of a volume of gay verse, still procurable. This good-natured reprobate died of a gorge of cod-fish the year after François Arouet left school. The Duke de Sully, the Duke de Vendôme, the Prince de Conti, and other persons of rank were glad to escape the formalities and observances of the court, and join the easy livers of the Temple.

Our law student was early welcomed to their circle, and we can see from his verses and letters of those years that he was upon a footing of perfect familiarity with its members. Other great houses and noted salons were opened to him; his school-mates bore him in mind; and we soon see him, mere youth as he was, living the life and taking the tone of a young man of fashion. He was *le bel esprit à la mode*, caressed by ladies,

and made much of by men, supping with princes, and making impromptu verses in the salon of the Abbé de Chaulieu. The complacent Duvernet, himself an abbé, describes the Templars as a society of Epicurean philosophers, "all of a severe probity," who enjoyed the charms of merry and friendly conversation at a time when Paris was rent into theologic factions. Every one of them, he remarks, composed verses, which made the student say, one day, at the house of the Prince de Conti, as they were taking their places at table, "We are here all princes or all poets."

He abandoned himself to this gay and splendid life, drinking deep draughts of a kind of pleasure that is peculiarly captivating to a young man of his temperament and circumstances. No doubt he was a wild lad, for a time; for at eighteen it is not possible to be a very philosophic Epicurean. There were no latch-keys in those primitive times, and Maître Arouet was not a father who would often sit up late for a prodigal, nor willingly go to bed leaving him to be let in at an hour unknown. One night, his patience being exhausted, he had the keys brought to him, locked up the house, and went to bed, taking the keys with him. The youth came home late (that is, at ten o'clock) from a verse-making carouse with his fine friends, and found the front door inexorably shut. He had to seek a lodging, and found refuge at last in a porter's chair in the court of the Palace of Justice, where he fell into that deep sleep which late carousers know. In the morning, two lawyers, going by to early court, found him still fast asleep, recognized him, and had him carried, chair and all, into a café near by, in the midst of which he woke, to find himself the centre of a group, merry at his expence.¹ And of course he found his allowance of money insufficient, — the latch-key controversy and the money question bearing to one another a certain relation. Writing of this period long after, he said: —

"I remember that, being one day under the necessity of borrowing money of a pawnbroker, I found two crucifixes upon his table. I asked him if he had taken them in pledge. He said, No; he never made a bargain except in presence of a crucifix. I told him that, in that case, one was enough, and I advised him to place it between the two thieves. He called me impious, and declared he would lend me no

¹ *Vie Privée de Voltaire et Madame du Châtelet*, par Madame Grafigny, page 17.

money. I took leave ; but he ran after me, and said, making the sign of the cross, that if I could assure him that I had no ill intentions in speaking to him in that way he might be able, with a good conscience, to accommodate me. I told him that I had only very good intentions. Then he concluded to lend me some money on my pledges, at ten per cent., deducting the interest in advance, and at the end of six months he disappeared with my pledges, which were worth four or five times the sum he had lent me. The countenance of this fine fellow, his tone, all his ways, were so comic that I have often made my companions laugh by imitating them.”¹

There is an anecdote, also, of a great lady giving him a hundred louis for correcting her verses, and of the use he made of the money, which may have some basis of truth. Going along the street, overjoyed to find himself the possessor of so large a sum, he came to where an auctioneer was selling a carriage, a pair of horses, and the liveries of a coachman and footman. He bid a hundred louis for the lot, and it was knocked down to him. All day he drove about Paris, giving his friends rides, supped gayly in the city, and continued to ride till late in the evening, when, not knowing what else to do with them, he crowded the horses into his father's stable, already full. The thundering noise of this operation woke the old man, who, on learning its cause, turned young scapegrace out-of-doors, and, the next day, had the carriage and horses sold for half price.

Voltaire has idealized all this in his comedy of “*Le Dépositaire*,” in which two brothers figure, resembling in some degree himself and his brother Armand : one a bigot and devotee ; the other a young fellow of society, agreeable and fond of pleasure. Ninon is the leading female character, a woman of the world and an “*estimable man*,” in contrast with whom there is a cheating Tartuffe of a church-warden. The elder brother is described as “*a serious fool*,” who had formed the “*extravagant design of being a perfect man* ;” sad and dismal, regardless of appearances, bent over an old Greek book, his face hidden in a greasy cap, ink on his fingers, and his body half buried in a heap of papers. The younger, on the contrary, lives to please and be pleased ; a little wild, perhaps, but entirely amiable and honorable, — a universal favorite. “*I love people of*

¹ 11 Œuvres de Voltaire, 394.

worth," says Ninon, "but bigots I hate; and I fear rogues who govern fools." There are things in this comedy which our law student may often have said to his severe and credulous brother: "You take a great deal of trouble to be unhappy. What would you say to a fool who should tear and tread down the flowers of his garden, lest he should enjoy their delightful fragrance? Oh, the pleasant glory to spoil your wine for fear of drinking too much!"

But the elder is not silent. "Go!" he cries. "Plunge neck-deep into the brilliant filth of that frenzied world, whose glitter enchants you. Turn into amusing ridicule virtuous men. Swim in pleasures,—in those shameful pleasures whose sweetness produces so much bitterness." And then he soliloquizes: "What a sweet and noble pleasure to hate pleasure; to be able to say to one's self, 'I am without desires, master of myself, just, serene, wise, my soul a rock in the midst of the storm!'" He speaks also of his "fool of a brother," who, without taking the least trouble, delights all the world; a plain proof that the world is no better than he, and only fit to be renounced.

All this, doubtless, François and Armand repeated many times, while their irascible father regarded them as equally perverse and out of the way. "I have a pair of fools for sons," said he,—"one in verse, and the other in prose." His son François seldom said a neater thing.

The father was, indeed, distressed and alarmed to see his younger son neglecting his law studies, associating with princes and philosophers, and playing pranks highly unbecoming a youth who had his own way to make in the world. He bore it with what little patience he had for a year and a half, and then felt that the time was come to get the young man out of seductive Paris, beyond the reach of his friends of the Temple. He sent him first to the ancient Norman city of Caen, a hundred and forty miles from Paris, within sight of the English Channel,—that quaint and venerable Caen, the residence and tomb of William the Conqueror. But Caen was a polite city of several thousand inhabitants, the seat of a university, with an ancient and large library, and a considerable circle of people interested in literature and learning. All doors at Caen opened to receive this *bel esprit à la mode de Paris*. Madame d'Os-

seville, whose poems still rest in manuscript in the Caen Library, gave him welcome, dazzled by the brilliancy of his conversation and the flash of his impromptus; until, learning that he wrote libertine verses also, she invited him no more. But there was a Father Couvigny, of the Jesuit college there, who, having no scruples of the kind, associated with him constantly, and foretold for him a splendid future. [And still his father urged him to return and settle to a career, offering to buy for him, in due time, the high post of counselor to the parliament of Paris. "Tell my father," said he to the bearer of this offer, "that I do not desire any place which can be bought. I shall know how to make one for myself that will cost nothing."] And, indeed, in the midst of his reckless gayety, he did not lose sight of his object. He exerted his better powers; he wrote serious verse; he was already revolving subjects and schemes which he was to treat ere long with an effect that justified his confident reply to his father's generous offer.

Caen did nothing to wean him from his choice, and he returned to Paris, after an absence of some months, to resume his former way of life.

CHAPTER VIII.

HEAD OVER EARS IN LOVE.

AFTER more years of disastrous and humiliating war than François-Marie Arouet could remember, France, in the spring of 1713, enjoyed peace again. The Treaty of Utrecht between England, Holland, and France, signed in April, was to France like air to a man suffocating, like sudden deliverance to a hopeless prisoner. There is no news so exhilarating as the news of peace after a long war. On the 10th of June the King of France, to the profound joy of his subjects, appointed an ambassador to reside at the capital of the Netherlands, and the person chosen was the Marquis de Châteauneuf, brother to the late abbé, the boy poet's guide, philosopher, and friend. The old diplomatist was good enough to appoint the youth one of his pages, or, as we should term it, *attachés* unpaid; and so, amid the general joy of that summer, our student of law had the additional pleasure of a journey to the Hague in the train of an ambassador. Virtue itself is not always so agreeably rewarded.

The marquis and his retinue reached the Hague September 28, 1713, though his formal reception occurred later. "It is a pleasant jest," wrote the page, "to make a solemn entry into a city where you have been living for several weeks."

This appointment in the diplomatic line was not, perhaps, the mere expedient of an exasperated father to get a troublesome son out of Paris. Voltaire all his life had a certain hankering to be employed in diplomacy. Pierre de Ronsard, French poet of the sixteenth century, had begun his truly fine career as page to an ambassador, a post from which he advanced to the most confidential trusts a subject could fulfill. Maître Arouet might well have accepted this proceeding as a happy compromise with his unmanageable son, and might have indulged a rational expectation of his advancement.

With a quarter of his talents and ten times his prudence, he might have come to be ambassador to a small kingdom at sixty-five.

His diplomatic career was short, and very much in the style of an ambassador's page in an Italian comedy. Among the great number of French people then living in Holland, as in all Protestant countries and colonies, refugees from the savage intolerance of Louis XIV.'s priests, there was a Madame Dunoyer, Protestant by birth, the wife of a French Catholic gentleman of repute, from whom she was separated. Exiled by the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, she had lived in Switzerland, in London, in Holland, the precarious, demoralizing life of a woman without any of the usual means of support. She had written various kinds of trash, and in 1704 published at Cologne a work in seven volumes, entitled "Letters Historical and Gallant," full of the scandal and gossip by which the dullest and meanest of our kind can make a certain sensation in the world. The letters were fictitious, supposed to be the correspondence between a woman of fashion in Paris and a lady living in the country. These volumes had made Madame Dunoyer an object of interest to a portion of the public, and an object of dread to another portion. She was feared, courted, and despised, as the editor of a scurrilous journal is sometimes feared, courted, and despised; for what she had done once she could do again.

A moth does not fly to a candle by a more inevitable impulse than such a page as Aronnet at nineteen gets within range of such a woman, living in such a place. She had two daughters: the elder married and living in Paris; the younger, Olimpe, not pretty, as he used to say sixty years after, but extremely amiable and winning. He fell in love with her, — he nineteen and without a profession, she twenty-one and without a sou. It was an honest and virtuous love on his part, creditable to him as a human being, nor quite as rash and reckless as it seemed. It was the best love he ever experienced, and, in other circumstances, might have had its natural issue, to the lasting good of both. His scheme was to get her to return to France, where her father still lived, where she had influential connections, and where no one was more sure of a welcome than a stray lamb returning to the fold of

Louis XIV.'s church. "The king wishes every one in France to be of *his* religion," truly said a blunt soldier to the Protestants whom he was sent to convert, at the head of a body of cavalry. The mother, according to this sage lover, was a dragon, who treated her daughter harshly, and did not deserve to possess such an adorable creature. In other words, Madame Dunoyer, who had made a promising match for one daughter, was intent on getting for "Pimpette" a husband who would be both able and willing to establish comfortably a mother-in-law. A page of nineteen, a notary's son, without fortune, bore no resemblance whatever to that son-in-law of her dreams who was to end her long and bitter struggle with adverse fortune.

All went prosperously with his love for a few weeks, the young lady returning his affection, and the mother not remarking it. October and November passed, and still they were happy. But one dreadful evening, about the first of December, when the lover returned late to the embassy, the ambassador confronted him, told him all was discovered, and he must start for home the next day. The Marquis de Châteauneuf, with the timidity natural to a public man at the critical hour of a ticklish mission, dared not make an enemy of this woman of the audacious pen, and feared she might affront his page in some way which he could not avoid officially noticing. The lover begged for mercy, but all he could get was a single day's grace, with the condition annexed of not leaving the embassy until the moment of his final departure. He must go in forty-eight hours, and not see his Pimpette again.

His valet was a cunning Norman named Lefèvre, a true valet of comedy, whom he could implicitly trust, and by him he sent a long letter to Pimpette, relating the disaster, and unfolding his plans for their speedy reunion. Already she had agreed to rejoin her father, and this explosion, as he urged, should only hasten her flight from a mother unworthy of her.

"Send me three letters," he wrote, "one for your father, one for your uncle, and one for your sister; that is absolutely necessary; but I shall only deliver them when circumstances favor, especially the one for your sister. Let the shoemaker be the bearer of those letters; promise him a reward; and let him come with a last in his hand, as if to mend my shoes. Add to those letters a

note for me; let me have that comfort on setting out; and, above all, in the name of the love I bear you, my dear, send me your portrait; use all your efforts to get it from your mother; it had better be in my hands than in hers, for it is already in my heart. The servant I send you is wholly devoted to me, and if you wish to pass him off to your mother as a snuff-box maker, he is a Norman and will play the part well. . . . I shall do all that is possible to see you to-morrow before leaving Holland; but, as I cannot assure you of it, I bid you good-by, my dear heart, for the last time, and I do it swearing to you all the tender love which you merit. Yes, my dear Pimpette, I shall love you always. Lovers the least faithful say the same; but their love is not founded, as mine is, upon perfect esteem. [I love your goodness as much as I love your person, and I only ask of Heaven the privilege of imbibing from you the noble sentiments you possess.] . . . Adieu, once more, my dear mistress; think a little of your unhappy lover, but not so as to dash your spirits. Keep your health if you wish to preserve mine. Above all, have a great deal of discretion; burn my letter and all that you get from me; it were better to be less generous to me, and take better care of yourself. Let us take comfort from the hope of seeing one another very soon, and let us love one another as long as we live. Perhaps I shall even come back here in quest of you, and, if so, I shall be the happiest of men. But, after all, provided you get to Paris, I shall be only too well satisfied; for, wishing only your welfare, I would willingly secure it at the expense of my own, and should feel myself richly recompensed in cherishing the sweet assurance that I had contributed to restore you to happiness."

So far, so well. This was the letter of an honest lover, and the scheme seemed feasible. But when he summoned Lefèvre to convey the epistle to the young lady, the valet told him he had received orders to deliver to the ambassador any letters his master might charge him with. Away with prudence! He *would* see his mistress, despite the vigilance of his chief, one of the most experienced diplomatists in Europe. Favored by an unavoidable delay in setting out, he engaged in a series of manœuvres, precisely such as we laugh at at the theatre, when an imaginary Figaro exerts his talents to help or baffle a fictitious Count. He wrote a letter to Pimpette, which he meant the marquis to read, and told his valet to deliver it to him, as ordered. He corresponded

with her continually, and had several interviews with her. One night, at the rising of the moon, he left the embassy in disguise, placed a carriage near the adored one's abode, made the usual comedy signal under her window, received her to his arms, and away they rode, five miles into the country to the sea-side village of Scheveningen; and there, with the ink and paper which he had provided, she wrote the three letters that he desired for use in Paris. This certainly was the entertainment to which he invited her, and which appears to have been carried out.

She was as mad as he; or at least she fooled him to the top of his bent. The shoemaker's family, who lived near her abode, were in their interests; the lovers sometimes met at their house, and when he visited Pimpette in the evening, it was the wife of the shoemaker who mounted guard and signalized the approach of an enemy. One evening, it appears, the woman was mistaken, and gave a false alarm, which caused the page to take flight with needless precipitation. The woman thought she saw approaching the secretary of legation, but it was no such matter. The only letter of the young lady which has been preserved is one which explains this error of judgment on the part of the sentinel, and urges him to come again. This eager and ill-spelt letter he appears to have carried about his person for years after, and it bears a formal attestation, still legible, that it was found upon him when he arrived at the Bastille, in 1717.

"Do all you can," she concluded, "that I may see you this evening. You will only have to go down into the shoemaker's kitchen, and I answer for it that you have nothing to fear, for my mother believes you half-way to Paris. So, if you please, I shall have the pleasure of seeing you this evening. And if that cannot be, let me attend the mass at the embassy; I will ask M. de la Bruyère [secretary of legation] to show me the chapel. To women curiosity is permitted. And then, without any disguise, I shall ask him if they have received any news from you yet, and when you started. Do not refuse me this favor, my dear Arouet; I ask it of you in the name of the tenderest of all things,—the love I bear you. Adieu, my amiable child. I adore you, and I swear that my love will last as long as my life."¹

¹ Jeunesse de Voltaire, page 67.

This note was signed "Dunoyer," and had a postscript, begging him, if they failed to meet that evening, to send her some dear news of himself.

An experienced ambassador had an eye upon this uncontrollable page of his, and was not long ignorant of any of his escapades. He gave the young man formal orders, in the king's name, not to leave the embassy; which only caused the love-stricken youth to declare to Pimpette that he would visit her, though it should bring his head to the block. And he did see her again and again. Closely watched by day, he would drop from a window at midnight, and go to her house, near which she would join him, if she could manage to steal unperceived from her mother's bed. The ambassador came to the point with him at last, and gave him his choice,—either to leave Holland instantly, or wait a week for the next official opportunity, and, in the mean time, engage not to go out of the hotel.

The distracted lover chose to remain a prisoner. Then he dispatched Lefèvre with his maddest note to Pimpette, explaining the new situation, and begging her to come to him, since he could not go to her. "Send Lisbette about three," he wrote; "I will give her a parcel for you containing a suit of man's clothes. You can put them on in her room; and if you have regard enough for a poor prisoner who adores you, you will take the trouble to come to the embassy about dusk. To what a cruel extremity are we reduced, my dear! Is it your part to come to me? But it is our only way of seeing one another. You love me, and so I hope to see you this day in my rooms."

It was his own clothes that he sent; but, fearing they might be recognized, he hired a cloak and doublet, with which she was to conceal them. Pimpette actually assumed the disguise and visited him, to his great content, but not without being suspected. The ambassador summoned Lefèvre to his presence; and questioned him closely; but the cunning Norman contrived, as he thought, to throw dust in the eyes of the chief, and even found out that a trap was to be set to catch Pimpette if she should repeat the visit. The page at once sent his valet to bring back his clothes, and that night he got out of his window once more, and met her at their usual rendezvous.

The old diplomatist discovered this also, and wrote in a rage to Maître Arouet, giving him such an account of his son's conduct as an angry ambassador might, who saw the success of his mission hazarded by a comedy of love between a rash boy of nineteen and an experienced virgin of twenty-one.

December 18th, the lover left the Hague, and began his journey to Paris, sending her long letters to the last day of his stay, and continuing to write from the cabin of the yacht that bore him away from the enchanted shore. A very long and tumultuous epistle, indeed, was the one which he sent back to her from the frontier, swearing eternal constancy and unfolding his plan for her deliverance. Her mother, as it appears, had assailed the incomparable Pimpette with something more terrible than words, and he entreats her to burn his letters, lest her mother should find them and again "maltreat" her. "Do not expose yourself to the fury of your mother: you know what she is capable of — alas! you have experienced it but too well. Dissemble with her; it is your only chance. Tell her (which I hope you never will do) that you have forgotten me; tell her that you hate me; and then love me all the more for it."

He told her what he meant to do as soon as he should reach Paris. Already he had taken measures; he had written a letter to the friend and patron of his college days, Father Tournemine, Jesuit, and asked his aid in bringing back a stray lamb to the fold. "The first thing I shall do, on my arrival at Paris, will be to enlist Father Tournemine on your behalf. Next, I shall deliver your letters. I shall be obliged to explain to my father the cause of my return, and I flatter myself that he will not be entirely displeased with me, provided they have not prejudiced him against us beforehand. But even if I should have to face his anger, I shall always consider myself too happy, when I think that you are the most lovely being in the world, and that you love me. In my short life I have passed no moments so sweet as those in which you have sworn to me that you returned my tender love."

He was a week in performing the journey from the Hague to Paris, — from eight A. M. on Mouday, December 18th, to the evening of Sunday, the 24th; the distance being about

three hundred miles. Only couriers, diplomatists, and lovers averaged forty miles a day in 1713. It was Christmas Eve when he arrived, and he went promptly to Father Tournemine at his old quarters in the Collège Louis-le-Grand. Joyful tidings greeted him. Tournemine had received, approved, and answered his letter; he had communicated with the Bishop of Evreux, cousin of Pimpette; he was zealous in the cause of the stray lamb. The lover, finding the priest so apt, intrusted him with the three letters that Pimpette had written to her relations in Paris; and he agreed to use all his influence to induce her father to receive her. This was, indeed, a most hopeful beginning.

But he had a father according to the flesh, who might not find the return of stray lambs of twenty-one so interesting. The young diplomatist deemed it best to reconnoitre the ground a little before coming within range of an irascible parent; and he soon discovered that he had better not think of joining the family at their Christmas dinner that year. The ambassador had not only written to his father a "bloody letter," giving a full account of his proceedings in Holland, but had sent also the infuriate letters of Madame Dunoyer to himself, in which those proceedings were related with an enraged mother's emphasis and fluency.

The notary's patience gave way; he had borne from this young man all that he could. He formally disinherited him. He went to the minister and procured a *lettre de cachet*, with which to get him arrested and confined; and when the friends of the family, at the young man's request, remonstrated with him, all that they could obtain was a change of sentence from imprisonment to exile beyond the seas, in the French West Indies. François might well write to his adored one, "I dare not show myself."

His consolation was to write long letters, telling her, over and over again, that his heart was wholly and unalterably hers, and that nothing was of any consequence to him so long as she loved him. Fathers might do their worst; he was unshaken; but if she held back, if she determined to remain in Holland, if she abandoned him, he assured her that the moment he heard the news he would kill himself. "Never love equaled mine," he wrote; "for never was there a person bet-

ter worthy of love than you. . . . Sorrow, fear, love, agitate me violently; but I always return to bear myself the secret testimony that I have done nothing unbecoming an honest man; and that enables me to support my miseries. . . . My dear Pimpette, my lovely mistress, my dear heart, write to me very soon; nay, at once. As soon as I receive your letter I shall know my fate. What will become of me I know not. I am in frightful uncertainty about everything; I only know that I love you. Ah, when shall I embrace you, my dear heart?"

The sage maiden, versed in love, who had drawn on this susceptible page to such a point, was naturally the first to recover her self-possession. She still wrote kindly to him, but gave him good advice, telling him he must make it up with his father at any sacrifice, even if he had to take seriously to the study of the law. The young man obeyed her, and wrote to his father from his hiding-place the most submissive letters every day, in one of which he said, "I consent, O father, to go to America, and even to live there on bread and water, if only, before I go, you will let me embrace your knees." Fathers generally relent in such cases; but Maître Aronet exacted a hard condition, that must have seemed most reasonable and generous to all except this unfledged Voltaire: he must settle to his work of preparing to practice law, and, to that end, reside with a solicitor, attend his office regularly, and apply himself to the business of drawing and copying documents. He did not shrink from giving his Pimpette even this proof of his affection. January 20, 1714, he had the melancholy pleasure of informing her that he had obeyed her command, and had already been a week at work in the office of a solicitor, "learning the trade of pettifogger, to which my father destines me, and hoping in that way to regain his good-will."

Meanwhile, he pushed on his scheme for the recovery of the stray lamb, and with such effect that Father Tellier, the king's confessor, was interested in it, and urged the Marquis de Châteauneuf to lend his aid. But that accomplished diplomatist knew why and for whom the lamb was wanted in France. The lover had forborne to mention to Father Tournemine that he had ever so much as seen Mademoiselle Olimpe Dunoyer, and probably the ambassador supplied this omission.

The young lady wrote with less frequency, said less and less about love, and lent a willing ear to the addresses of others. A year or two later her mother, after desperate exertions, saw the fascinating Olimpe a countess, — Madame la Comtesse de Winterfield. The young lover consoled himself as best he could, and, years after, when he had become a celebrated person, he had the pleasure of seeing fourteen of his letters to Pimpette printed as an appendix to a new edition of her mother's "Lettres Historiques et Gallantes." But to the end of his life he preserved a tender recollection of the woman he had passionately loved at this spring-time of his life, and found opportunities of testifying his good-will toward her.

CHAPTER IX.

SOLICITOR'S CLERK.

AT present, then, the bird is caged. [Love has done for him what authority had failed to do, and we see him, in January, 1714, junior clerk in the office of Maître Alain, a Paris solicitor in extensive practice, who had at least two clerks besides this new acquisition.] He had to board in the house of the solicitor, over which Madame Alain presided, a lady who scarcely knew there was such a thing in the world as poetry. One of his fellow-clerks was Thieriot, a gay lad like himself, fond of verses, of the drama, of pleasure generally, learned in actors and actresses. These two young men were illustrations of the Goethean maxim, not then promulgated: In faults men are much alike; in good qualities they differ. This Thieriot, his intimate friend for sixty years, was an Arouet in everything but genius and constancy; an Arouet in everything except that energy of soul which enables some men to rise superior to an imperfect education and misleading companions, and rescue a portion of themselves and a part of their lives for something nobler than pleasure. Thieriot became excessively fond of his new comrade, and trumpeted him with such ardor and frequency that he was long known in Paris, King Frederic tells us,¹ as Voltaire's hawk. Another clerk of Maître Alain was one Bainast, who seems also to have been a companionable person, with a taste for literature.

It needs but a slight acquaintance with the manners of the time to know that our young poet's life with the solicitor was a form of penal servitude, including hard work, unsavory fare, homely lodgings, assiduous deference to Maître and Madame Alain, with but occasional surreptitious glimpses of that brilliant world of which, till lately, he had been a shining atom.

¹ Correspondence of Frederic II., of Prussia, Letter to D'Alembert, October 27, 1772.

He could have borne it all, if Olimpe had been faithful to him, for he was constancy's own self; he could not have been constant. He was not long in discovering that his Pimpette was bestowing smiles upon another, and that his situation in the solicitor's office intolerable. He had cut down his allowance of money, and he became a frequent borrower, putting his name to bills which he found difficult to meet. For some years of this part of his life he was in straits for money, and thus acquired a sense of its value which poets do not always possess. A note promising to pay five hundred francs upon his coming of age was given by him soon after he heard of the Ninon legacy, and the document graces at the present moment a collection of autographs in Orleans. Traces of similar transactions of his have been discovered in old court records, and some of them appear to have given him trouble many years after their date.¹ It is probable that the chief advantage which he derived from the Ninon legacy was its providing a basis, small but solid, for his credit with money lenders.

To complete his discontent, he suffered humiliation this year even in his character of poet. The Academy had offered, a year or two before, a prize of a group in bronze for the best poem upon the king's magnificent generosity in fulfilling a vow of his father, Louis XIII., by completing a new choir in the Cathedral of Notre Dame. Arouet had not only sent in a poem to compete, but had read it to friends, and forwarded a copy to the exiled Rousseau, who returned generous praise to the young poet. August 25, 1714, the award of the Academy was published, and it was not François-Marie Arouet who received the bronze. By a favoritism so obvious that every person of taste in Paris remarked it, the prize was given to a garrulous old Abbé du Jarri, author of two volumes of "Panegyrics of the Saints," and another upon the "Eloquence of the Pulpit, or the Best Way of preaching the Word of God," — works which I find advertised in booksellers' catalogues of that period. Du Jarri was so unlucky as to declare in his poem that the glory of the king was known throughout the whole earth, at the *burning poles* as well as at the frozen, which gave the wits of the Temple a fair opportunity of jesting at

¹ Voltaire, *Sa Vie et ses Œuvres*, par Abbé Maynard, vol. i. p. 103.

his expense. It was the poet La Motte who had decided the award, — the La Motte who had taken the lead of the literary faction that objected to the ascendancy of the ancients over the moderns, and were disposed to underrate Homer, Virgil, and Horace. Du Jarri, it appears, belonged to this faction, a circumstance which was supposed to have influenced the decision. When the unfortunate allusion to the burning poles was pointed out to La Motte, he said that no one knew for certain whether there was or was not a burning pole, and the question was, in any case, an affair of the Academy of Sciences, not of the French Academy. The wits of the city laughed at the successful poet, and the disappointed competitor relieved his mind by epigrams and satirical verses, in which the aged abbé, his poem, the bronze group, the Academy, and La Motte were all ridiculed. But he could not rail the seal of the Academy off the award. He remained unknown to the great public, while Du Jarri, elated and ridiculous, hastened to press with a volume of "Poems, Christian, Heroic, and Moral."

Arouet and some of his roystering friends had a ludicrous interview with the abbé, perhaps in one of the booksellers' shops of Paris, which were numerous and important even then.¹ Du Jarri, not aware that one of the young men was his competitor, showed them some of the proofs of his new volume, the first page of which bore the device, "To Immortality." Not supposing that they recognized him as the author, he proceeded to explain these words in a style that seemed highly absurd to the young men: —

DU JARRI. — "This is the device of the French Academy. The piece, however, is not of the Academy, though the Academy has adopted it; and if those gentlemen had actually composed the poem they would not have treated the subject otherwise. You must know that every other year the Academy offers a prize for poetry, and in that way every other year immortalizes somebody. You see in my hands the work which has won the prize this year. Oh, how fortunate is the author of this poem! For forty years he has been composing without

¹ In the eighteenth century, publishing and printing formed one of the most important industries of Paris. A list published in 1701 gives the names of one hundred and seventy-eight master booksellers in business, thirty-five out of business, twenty-seven widows still keeping shop, thirty-six master printers, and nineteen widows carrying on printing-offices." (5 Journal De Barbier, 4.)

becoming known to the public; and now, for a little poem, we see him a sharer in all the reputation of the Academy."

AROUET. — "But does it never happen that an author who is declared immortal by the Forty is consigned to the rank of the Cotins by the public, the judge in the last resort?"

DU JARRI. — "That cannot be; for the Academy was instituted for the purpose of fixing the taste of France, and there is no appeal from its decisions."

A COMRADE OF AROUET. — "I have some good proofs that an assembly of forty persons is not infallible. Among others, there is the *Cid* and Furetière's Dictionary, which sustained themselves against the Academy; and, since it has censured good books, it might happen to approve some very bad ones."

DU JARRI (reading in a loud voice by way of triumphant answer to this remark). — "Christian prize poem, by Monsieur the Abbé du Jarri."

AROUET. — "Before you begin we ought to know who Monsieur the Abbé du Jarri is; also the subject of his poem and the nature of the prize."

DU JARRI. — "Formerly, Monsieur the Abbé Jarri published several funeral orations and some sermons. At present he is getting through the press a volume of his poems, and there is reason to believe he is as good a poet as great orator. The subject of his poem is the praise of the king upon the occasion of the new choir of Notre Dame, erected by Louis XIV., and promised by Louis XIII. The prize is a beautiful group in bronze, in which there is a wonderful blending of the fabulous and the sacred; Renown appearing in it near Religion, and Piety supported by a Genius. For the rest, the rivals of Monsieur the Abbé du Jarri were young people, nineteen or twenty years old, while Monsieur the Abbé is sixty-five, and it is very just that honor should be paid to his age."

Having delivered this modest explanation to the mischievous youngsters before him, the abbé coughed, and read with all an author's fond, discriminating emphasis his Christian poem in honor of the king. Such, at least, is the report of the scene given by the young rival of nineteen or twenty, in a letter to a friend.¹

This was harmless fun; but among the verses which the solicitor's clerk wrote on this occasion was a short and extremely disagreeable satire called "Mud" (*Le Bourbier*), — a word which describes as well as names the piece. It was aimed at

¹ 67 Œuvres de Voltaire, 39.

La Motte, whose fables are still reckoned among the excellent things produced in that age, and it was in every sense and to the uttermost degree unbecoming and improper, as the author of it afterwards admitted. But the writing of this piece led to his deliverance from the thralldom of the solicitor's office, and from the meagre housekeeping of Madame Alain. His father, who had seen Rousseau ruined and banished for couplets not worse than the "Mud" hurled by his son at La Motte, was alarmed anew on his account, berated him soundly, and threatened to exclude him from his house unless he changed his way of life and attended more punctually to the business of the office.

No doubt he gave his father abundant cause of uneasiness. Forty years after, in writing to a man of science, he had occasion to discuss the prevalent opinion of the poisonous nature of powdered diamond, and he was able to draw an illustration of his point from this wild period of his youth. Powdered glass, he then learned, could be swallowed with impunity; and if glass, why not diamond? He told his learned friend that he remembered seeing young men, in their revels, after emptying their glasses in honor of some eminent toast of the day, chew those wine-glasses to pieces and swallow them. "I had the misfortune," he adds, "to sup sometimes, in my youth, with gentlemen of that kind. They broke their glasses with their teeth, and neither the wine nor the glass did them any harm."¹

He could not have done much of such revelry as this; his constitution did not admit of it, and we know that he had always serious compositions in course of execution, upon which he founded confident hopes of a career which should justify his aversion to the profession of his father's choice.

Meanwhile, his father remained unconvinced, and strongly disapproved of his son's conduct. He was right and he was wrong, as parents are apt to be whose offspring prove to be soaring falcons instead of respectable chickens. This irascible father stood indignant and alarmed to see his fledgeling resolved upon attempting the airy heights, without being yet strong enough upon the wing to keep out of *le bourbier*. The young man, on his part, loathed the work of Maître Alain's office, and believed he had a right to loathe it, as being in itself absurd and not his vocation.

¹ 75 Œuvres de Voltaire, 63.

— Among his fine friends of the Temple was a young gentleman named Caumartin, nephew of Louis-Urbain de Caumartin, Marquis de Saint-Ange, a magistrate of honorable and old renown. The marquis was just such a personage as Maître Arouet desired his younger son to become ; for he had made his career in the law, and now, after filling high places with honor, had retired to a château and estate which he possessed, nine miles from the royal palace of Fontainebleau. The younger Caumartin, it seems, conveyed to Maître Arouet an invitation for his reprobate son to take up his abode at Saint-Ange, and there pursue legal studies in a larger and more agreeable way than was possible in the office of a Paris solicitor. The reprobate, as Duvernet intimates, made those profuse and emphatic promises which reprobates usually do in such cases, and the notary gave his consent. Behold virtue again rewarded ! In the lovely autumn days of 1714 we see the solicitor's clerk turning his back upon involved and tedious copying, and riding out through a beautiful country to an ancient and singularly interesting château, where he was installed the permanent guest of the man in France who was fullest of what he wanted most !

CHAPTER X.

AT THE CHÂTEAU OF SAINT-ANGE.

No memory is so likely to be stored with things curious and interesting as that of an old lawyer and magistrate. M. de Caumartin was one of those old lawyers and magistrates who have a particular curiosity with regard to contemporary events and persons, and a memory from which no detail escapes. The Duke de St. Simon, not a lenient judge, describes him as a man of large person, handsome and well formed, very capable in law and finance, honest, obliging, and polite, though a little given to play the great lord in a harmless way. "He knew everything," continues the diarist, "in history, in genealogy, in court anecdotes; and remembered everything that he had ever heard or read, even to repeating in conversation whole pages." His father also had been a public man, in the confidence of the government of his time; so that the present lord of Saint-Ange knew familiarly the men, the events, the gossip, the scandal, the "inside truth" of the last three reigns, from the stirring days of Henry IV. and the League to these sad closing weeks of Louis XIV. A library, rich in the works of the great age of French literature, was one of the special treasures of the chateau, and the walls of the edifice were covered with portraits of the men of whom the old counselor most loved to converse and the young poet most loved to hear.

Imagine an American youth of twenty, educated in the literatures of Greece, Rome, and Judea, but knowing scarcely anything of the history of his own country, established as an inmate of one of our few historic houses, and listening day by day to some fluent, enthusiastic grandson of a Lee, an Adams, a Jefferson, a Madison, a Jay, a Schuyler, — one who had seen the heroes of the Revolution and taken part in the administrations of the earlier presidents. Imagine the joy

and pride with which the young man would discover that he, too, had a country, and that there had been heroes, statesmen, orators, and patriots on his native soil as well as in the lands of old. M. de Caumartin loved most to dwell upon Henry IV., that bold Henry of Navarre, whose career had so much in it that all men admire, and so little that Frenchmen cannot easily forgive. How varied, how strange, how fascinating, how long, the tale! What incident, what vicissitude, what men, what interests! Our young poet heard the old man relate it spell-bound, and fancied that here was the great theme for an epic poem, — the Iliad of France! Without knowing, as he says, anything of the nature or laws of an epic, he began tumultuously to write passages of a “Henriade,” and thus entered upon a work which occupied him at intervals for the next ten years, and upon which he expended more toil than upon any other of his works.

It was, however, the long reign of Louis XIV. which M. de Caumartin personally knew, and of which he could relate those trivial, interesting details which make the life of conversation and narrative. From him the young guest heard the anecdote of Louis XIV. and the battle of Ramillies, which has been so often repeated. Upon receiving the news of the defeat, the king said, “Has God, then, forgotten all that I have done for him?” This was a rare story for such ears! Many such he heard, and in this agreeable way he began to collect the stores of material for a work which saw the light forty years later, — “The Age of Louis XIV.”

→ If he came to Saint-Ange to study law, he forgot his purpose. With a manuscript tragedy in his trunk which critics had praised; with an epic poem begun; with the history of France, all unwritten, surging in his brain; with short poems in manuscript circulating in Paris drawing-rooms, and escaping now and then into print; with a sympathetic circle of accomplished persons urging him on toward the goal of his ambition; living in an historic château furnished with an ample library, and listening daily to one of the most interesting talkers of his generation, he could not but yield to manifest destiny, and embrace finally the literary career. He lived, as it appears, several months at Saint-Ange, visiting Paris occasionally, and always attentive to those last events of the reign of

Louis XIV., which he was to relate by and by. Paris was only forty miles distant, and could easily be reached in a day.

The king was approaching the close of his seventy-seventh year in the summer of 1715, and there was scarcely an intelligent individual in France who did not long for his death. As the news of his decline reached Saint-Ange, from time to time, what topics of discourse were furnished for the ancient master of the château sitting at table with so receptive a person as François Arouet! No one could better explain than the old financier why the king's treasury was a thousand million francs behindhand, and why the king's paper was selling in Paris at an average discount of seventy per cent. For fourteen years there had been a large annual deficit, which had been met by every kind of device which finance ministers had been able to invent. The lord of Saint-Ange knew them all.

But it was not the empty treasury and the distressed kingdom which then occupied men's minds. It was a theological imbroglio, puerile and frivolous in its nature, but terrible and devastating in its consequences. The Bull Unigenitus had recently been let loose upon France, by Le Tellier, the keeper of the old king's conscience; and no wild beast breaking from an Indian jungle ever carried into a defenseless village more alarm. M. de Caumartin could relate the whole history of this childish and tragic controversy; and we can easily imagine how such a tale would strike the mind of his young guest. Maître Arouet was the father of François-Marie, but the Bull Unigenitus had much to do with engendering Voltaire. I think I see this inquisitive, laughing youth, trained to mockery, but most capable of compassion, listening to the old counselor's story of the Bull: how, as long ago as 1552, the learned Dr. Baius "took it into his head" to sustain a number of propositions touching predestination, much to the prejudice of the doctrine of free-will; how some monks of the Cordelian order, hostile to Baius, selected "seventy-six of these propositions," denounced them to the Pope as heretical, and obtained a Bull condemning them; how the Bull contained a doubtful passage, the meaning of which depended upon the position of a comma, and the friends of Baius sent to Rome to know where the comma was to be placed; how Rome, busy with other matters, sent as an answer a copy of the Bull in which

the doubtful sentence had no comma at all; how a learned priest assured Dr. Baius that a papal Bull must be believed and obeyed, even though it contained errors; and how Dr. Baius then peacefully retracted, — which was a much better plan, remarks Voltaire, than reducing a hundred cities to ashes in the cause.

Thus ended the first chapter of the history of the Bull. The second included the Jansenist and Molinist controversy, one result of which our young mocker had witnessed in his own home, in the unpleasing, irrational demeanor of his brother Armand. Molina was a Spanish Jesuit, who sustained the old doctrine of free-will with a new subtlety all his own. Man's will is free, said Molina, but God foresees how he will exercise his will, and arranges all events in accordance therewith. Jansenius was a French bishop, who wrote a huge book, in which the doctrine of predestination was carried to the extreme of asserting that God commands some things which are impossible, and that Christ did not die for all men. The Jesuits obtained a Bull in 1641 condemning the five leading propositions of Jansenius. But the Jansenists denied that those five propositions were to be found in the Latin folio of their author, and thus the controversy was renewed and embittered, until another Bull in explanation gave a momentary peace to the church.

All this seems too silly to be recounted. But consider the *prize* which ambitious men were playing for, who used this monks' quarrel as a pretext. That prize was the king's ear, the control of the benefices, the supreme authority of the nation! This it was which converted a theological controversy into an engine of oppression, which filled prisons, ruined families, exiled virtuous men, and rendered hypocrisy one of the necessities of life. It is also a noteworthy circumstance, well known to all the English-speaking world, that the Jansenist theory of the universe, monstrous as it seems to men of the world, had formerly an attraction for educated persons, who placed religion first, and everything else second. Theology, indeed, never came so near the uglier truth of man's life and duty as in the Jansenist creed, and no further advance toward truth was possible, except by a change of method. Very much that was worthiest, highest, strongest, noblest, in France was

Jansenist, from valiant, self-denying Arnauld and gifted Pascal to the frugal, industrious, and virtuous business men of French cities and towns, the main-stay of the kingdom, who have kept it solvent and strong in spite of so many wasteful kings and conquerors. French catalogues contain the titles of seven hundred and sixty works relating to this affair of Jansenism and Molinism, which plagued France for two centuries.

The quarrel, in the life-time of young Arouet, had dwindled to the miserable question whether the five propositions were or were not contained in the work of Jansenius. The Jesuits presented a formula to all the "suspect:" "I condemn from my heart and with my mouth the doctrine of the five propositions contained in the book of Cornelius Jansenius, which doctrine is not that of St. Augustine, whom Jansenius has ill explained." This sufficed to destroy the Port Royalists, since those young ladies had never read the Latin folio of Jansenius, nor any other Latin, and could not conscientiously declare that the five propositions were contained in the book. A miracle, as Voltaire assures us, retarded their downfall by some years. He may have heard the story at Saint-ANGE. A niece of Pascal, who attended the school of the contumacious sisters, had a diseased eye, which was instantly cured by the application of a thorn from Christ's crown, one of the venerated relics of the convent. He adds, "Some persons who lived a long time with her assured me that her cure was very slow, which is highly probable. But it is not very probable that God, who performs no miracles to lead to our religion nineteen twentieths of our race to whom that religion is unknown or abhorrent, should have interrupted the order of nature on behalf of a little girl, in order to justify a dozen nuns in sustaining that Cornelius Jansenius did not write a dozen lines attributed to him." The Jesuits attempted miracles on their side, but Jesuit miracles had no weight with the people; and, later in the controversy, when a sister of Port Royal had a swollen leg miraculously cured, the prodigy did not save their convent from demolition. "The time was passed for such things, and Sister Gertrude had no uncle Pascal."¹

At last, no man in France, from the Cardinal de Noailles

¹ Siècle de Louis XIV., chapter xxxvii.

to the obscenest peasant in La Vendée, could live in safety, or die in peace, or be sure of burial, unless he was prepared to sign any absurd or self-contradictory form of words which Le Tellier might choose to present to him. The confessor made the ignorant old king believe that a refusal to sign was flat rebellion, and he made the Pope sanction a refusal of the sacraments to such rebels. The Bull *Unigenitus*, so named from its first word, was the last of the anti-Jansenist thunder-bolts, launched in 1713, — the device of Le Tellier for bringing France completely under his authority. It condemned one hundred and one propositions, several of which seemed to good Catholics harmless and true. All the prisons were full of Jansenists, and Le Tellier was about to proceed to the extremity of calling a council to depose Cardinal de Noailles, the chief opponent of the Bull, when his hand was arrested, at midsummer, 1715, by the serious illness of the king. The cardinal had become the idol of the nation, which was now divided into two impassioned parties, *Accepters* and *Refusers*. The *Accepters*, as Voltaire remarks, were a hundred bishops, the Jesuits, the Capuchins, and the court; the *Refusers* were fifteen bishops and all the nation. To such a point can a priest in power reduce a great and intelligent nation when, in addition to the ordinary foibles and faults of man, he labors under the infirmity of believing a narrow creed.

This dismal business of the Bull was the absorbing topic in every circle during Arouet's stay at Saint-Ange. The controversy presented to his consideration a baleful *mélange* of incongruities: ambition and disinterestedness, cowardice and audacity, credulity and conviction, cruelty and tenderness, sincerity and craft, — a combination of the worst and best in man, which, in later years, this master of words could find no adequate word for in any language, and was therefore obliged to call it The Infamous Thing.

In August, 1715, hearing of the king's danger, he left his safe and advantageous retreat of Saint-Ange, and went to Paris, to witness the change in all things which the coming event was to effect. He should have gone to Versailles, where the king and court then were, and seen how ruthlessly the confessor used the king's dying agonies for his own pur-

poses. The memoirs of the Duke de Simon, which make this reign an eternal admonition to mankind, were not published in the lifetime of Voltaire, and he probably never knew precisely what passed in the palace at Versailles during the last few days of the king's life. The old man died with that peace and dignity with which the most injurious members of our race usually take leave of the world they have preyed upon. Men who pined for his death were moved at the spectacle, — all the court, perhaps, except one priest and one woman: his confessor, Le Tellier, and his wife, Madame de Maintenon. As the king grew weaker the priest pressed him all the more to fill the vacant bishoprics and abbeys, several of which were important. He had the list ready, and a partisan of his own designated for each of the fat things. But the king persisted in refusing. He said he had enough to answer for without taking upon himself, in the last hours of his life, the responsibility of making those appointments; and so, as the plain-spoken St. Simon expresses it, Le Tellier saw that rich prey escape him.¹

The poor old king, as the end drew near, had some misgivings as to his ecclesiastical policy. He began to doubt whether the best mode of propitiating God is to force men to subscribe formulas they loathe, and to drive from their homes and country a hundred thousand virtuous families. His heart relented, too, toward the Cardinal de Noailles, his benevolent and gentle Archbishop of Paris, who had been high in his favor under the milder reign of his former confessor, Père la Chaise. Fixing his eyes upon Le Tellier and two cardinals who stood by, the king said, four days before his death, "I am sorry to leave the affairs of the church in the condition in which they are. In such matters I am perfectly ignorant. You know, and I call you to witness, that I have done nothing in relation thereto except what you wished, and I have done all that you wished. It is you, then, who must answer before God for what I have done, whether too much or too little. Once more I declare it, and I charge you with it before God. My conscience is clear; it is that of an ignorant man, who absolutely abandoned himself to you during the whole of this business."

¹ 11 St. Simon, 437, ed. of 1874.

The cardinals replied only by new flatteries, and the king resumed in a strain still more affecting: "In my ignorance I thought I could not do better for the peace of my conscience than to give myself up to you in full confidence. As to the Cardinal de Noailles, God is my witness that I do not hate him, and that I have always been sorry for what I felt it my duty to do against him."

Two of the courtiers exchanged glances at these words, and one of them said, in a low voice, "Ought we to let the king die without seeing his archbishop, and assuring him of pardon and reconciliation?"

The king, overhearing them, declared that, so far from objecting, he desired it. Here was a thunder-bolt, indeed, fallen into the midst of this group of serene and smiling priests and the woman, their tool, who was packing her trunks to be off before the breath was out of the king's body. They were equal to the emergency. "Oh, yes," said they, in substance, "let him come, by all means; but *first*, for the honor and safety of the good cause, he should obey the king by accepting the Bull." The king, fatigued, gave his consent without argument, and Le Tellier enjoyed a few days more of supremacy.

For eight days the drawing-room of the Duke of Orleans, who was to be regent during the minority, was so crowded with courtiers in the afternoon that, "speaking literally, a pin could not fall to the floor." But, August 29th, the king revived, ate two biscuits and drank a little wine with some relish. On that day, about two in the afternoon, the Duke de St. Simon visited the Duke of Orleans, and found no one there except the master, who, however, took this desertion in good part. He laughed, and told his visitor that not another human being had crossed his threshold all that day. "Such is man," remarks St. Simon. *Voilà le monde!* Two days after, on Sunday morning, September 1, 1715, the king's reign of seventy-two years was at an end. Our diarist concludes his narrative by an impressive statement: "The king's stomach and intestines were found to be of at least twice the capacity of men of his stature, — a very extraordinary circumstance, and the cause of his being so large and equal an eater."

CHAPTER XI.

EXILED FOR AN EPIGRAM.

OUR young poet is in Paris again, never a safe place for him, from youth to hoary age. He has brought with him his play, — that “*Œdipe*” upon which he has been fitfully working for the last two years, and upon which he has staked his hopes of fame and fortune; for, even then, a successful play upon the Paris stage gave the author some standing and considerable gain.

As yet he possesses nothing, and is nobody; for, at twenty-two, even a good poet was no longer a prodigy. Nothing short of a striking and sustained success could justify his rejection of the career offered him by his father. At present, great lords, who laugh at his sallies, copy his verses, and make room for him at their suppers, speak and *think* of him as “little Arouet,” and smile, perhaps, at the way he has of assuming an equality with them, — an amusing little fellow, with a surprising knack at hitting off verses. The old government of France was well enough described as a despotism tempered by epigrams; but the epigram-makers were always liable to find themselves in the condition of shorn lambs, without any one to temper the wind to them. To get “*Œdipe*” played was his object, a thing of vast difficulty to an untried author. Meanwhile, in the early days of the regency, he came near reaching fortune by a short cut, and he may well have been attentive to passing events. It was not certain, when the breath left the old king’s body, who was to wield his authority, and certain friends of the poet had hopes of having a voice in the bestowal of good things.

Louis XIV., who was married at twenty-two to a princess of Austria, reared but one legitimate child, — Louis, the Dauphin, born in the second year of the marriage. The gossips of the court, in speaking of this prince, used to apply to him

an old saying, which proved to be his history: "Son of a king, father of a king, never a king." But he lived to the age of fifty; and as late as April, 1711, when his father was seventy-three, he seemed likely to disappoint the prophets. He had then three sons: (1) Louis, Duke of Bourgoyne, twenty-nine; (2) Philippe, Duke of Anjou, King of Spain, twenty-eight; (3) Charles, Duke of Berri, twenty-five. The hope and pride of France was the eldest of these sons, the Duke of Bourgoyne, who was married to an amiable and popular princess, and was the father of two little boys, one six years of age and the other fourteen months. This little family stood between France and calamities which France had abundant reason to dread, — a long minority and a disputed succession.

But it seemed sufficient. There were four males in the immediate line of succession, to say nothing of the hale and hearty old king, who could still tire out most of his court in the hunting-field, and bring down a bird on the wing as surely as the best of them. In April, 1711, Monseigneur the Dauphin died of the small-pox. In February following, of the same or a similar disease, died, in quick succession, the new dauphin, his wife, and their eldest son, leaving only their youngest boy, then two years old, sick and sickly, who became Louis XV. That feeble, flickering life was all that interposed between France and complications threatening civil war. And, finally, the Duke of Berri, as if to complete the ruin of this house, was killed in 1714 by a fall from his horse. Knowing what we know of the history of France, we cannot wonder that the people of Paris should have rushed into the streets and filled the churches whenever it was noised abroad that this little boy had a bad cold.

The old king had a dozen or more illegitimate children, most of whom he caused to be formally legitimated. He assigned them magnificent châteaux and princely revenues, and compelled their recognition as princes of the blood royal. His favorite among them was Louis-Auguste de Bourbon, Duke du Maine, a man of forty, married to a profuse, ambitious princess, who lived in reckless magnificence at Sceaux, six miles south of Paris. For some years, the "court" of the Duchess du Maine at Sceaux had presented an intentional contrast to that of the old king, who, during the thirty years' ascendancy of

Madame de Maintenon, had a smile for no courtier whom he often missed at the daily mass. The Duchess du Maine loved pleasure, loved literature as one of the forms of pleasure, cultivated literary persons, gave splendid fêtes out-of-doors and in-doors, and played a conspicuous part in the pageantry of life. The duke, her husband, was a well-disposed, weak man, who stood in awe of his father, and was also very submissive to his wife.

The people of France were far from approving the lawless, enforced ascendancy of these *bâtards* over the whole nobility of the kingdom. France was still — nay, had been always, and is now — a virtuous nation. In spite of the bad example of her kings and priests, in spite of her agreeable Ninons and her repulsive saints, her sour Jansenists and her gay abbés, the mass of the people of France and the best of her educated class have believed in virtue, have practiced self-control, have observed those fundamental moralities from which all happiness comes. They could not, therefore, be brought to regard this Duke du Maine as a prince of their royal line, — a soldier who had not behaved well in the presence of the enemy, when a doting Xerxes of a father had intrusted him with the lives and honor of Frenchmen better than himself.

The dying king was persuaded to impose this favorite son upon France as the guardian of the heir to the crown, the commander of the royal guards during the minority, and King of France if the little Louis should die before maturity.

Louis XIV. had lived seventy-seven years, reigned seventy-two, and governed fifty-four, without ever meeting one human being who could stand before him and oppose his will. The spirit of mastery, a thing essentially barbarous, had been nourished in him to such a point that he will remain for this alone an interesting study to all time. His tutors began early to instill it into him. Among the curiosities shown in the imperial library at Petersburg is a leaf of a copy-book used by Louis XIV. when he was a dull little boy, learning to write. His writing-master set him as a copy, at the top of the page, French words signifying, —

HOMAGE IS DUE TO KINGS; THEY DO WHATEVER THEY LIKE.

The child wrote these words six times upon the leaf, in a

large, unsteady hand,¹ and it was nearly all he ever learned of the kingly state. When he came, late in life, to write instructions for the guidance of his son, he did little more than enlarge upon this copy-book text. Thus he wrote: "He who has given kings to men wills that they should be respected as his lieutenants, reserving to himself alone the right to inquire into their conduct. His will is that whosoever is born a subject should obey without question. Everything there is, in the whole extent of our dominions, belongs to *us*. The money in our treasury, the money remaining in the hands of our collectors, and the money which we leave as currency in the business of our people ought to be equally under our control." Again, "As the lives of subjects are the king's own property, he ought to have all the more care to preserve them."² Holding such opinions as these, he was induced by the Duke du Maine and Madame de Maintenon, a week before his death, to sign a codicil, which gave the duke the substance of power during the minority, and left to the Duke of Orleans little more than the title of regent. Then the usual mass was performed, and the king communed; after which he sent for his nephew of Orleans, and, as the terror-stricken St. Simon records, "With Jesus Christ still upon his lips, he assured the duke that he would find nothing in his will with which he would not be content."

There is a great deal of difference between a living and a dead lion. The old king had not been dead two days before the codicil had been set aside, the Duke du Maine reduced several degrees toward his native nullity, and the Duke of Orleans confirmed Regent of France, with power all but absolute. The brilliant court of the Duchess du Maine at Sceaux suffered an eclipse. It remained the haunt of "the pleasures," but did not become the seat of power. No woman, as Voltaire once remarked, ever ruined a husband with more grace than she; but she did not enjoy the opportunity, which women have since done, of ruining France. The duchess set seriously at work intriguing to undo what had been done, and thus Sceaux became a sort of rendezvous of disaffection, veiled by an apparent devotion to pleasure.

¹ Histoire de France, par Henri Martin, tome xiv. page 616.

² 2 Œuvres de Louis XIV., 336, etc., edition of 1806.

The literary circle of the Temple were also disappointed at the beginning of the regency. The Grand Prior, Philippe de Vendôme, returned to his palace in the Temple after long exile, and his ancient comrade, the Duke of Orleans, desired to appoint him a member of his council. The virtuous St. Simon rose indignant at the rumor, and roused all his brother dukes. Finally, he told the regent that if that debauched scoundrel entered the council, and thus took precedence of the nobility, the dukes would resign their places and leave the court. The Grand Prior was not appointed, and had nothing to give little Arouet except verses, suppers, too much wine, and a bad example of getting drunk every evening.

That young man (a moth amid these flaming candles), not aware how fate was playing with him, resumed his old way of life in Paris, always busy and inquisitive. Old things were passing away, and he was observant of the change. On the day of the king's funeral, he was out on the road to St. Denis, near Paris, where for eleven hundred years kings of France had been buried. It was more like a festival than a funeral. "I saw little tents," he records, "set up along the road, in which people drank, sang, laughed. The sentiments of the citizens of Paris had passed into the minds of the populace. The Jesuit, Le Tellier, was the principal cause of this universal joy. I heard several spectators say that the torches which lighted the procession ought to be used for setting fire to the houses of the Jesuits." France, as he says elsewhere, forgave the king his mistresses, but not his confessor. He may have contributed to the merriment of the crowd by a burlesque invitation to the funeral of the Bull Unigenitus, which was circulating in these days of gayety and relief. He was getting a kind of reputation that led knowing people to point to *him* when anything particularly impudent appeared. The burlesque spoke of the deceased Constitution as the natural daughter of Clement XI., and she was said to have died of grief at the loss of *seventy-seven* per cent. Le Tellier was to head the mourners, and the Cardinal Archbishop of Paris, who had profited much by the dame's decease, had been named to the Abbey of *Notre Dame des Victoires*. And, indeed, it was through the aid of the Cardinal de Noailles that the regent quieted that ridiculous and deadly dispute. A sinner with a

little sense and good nature found it easy to heal a wound which the pious old king had only touched to inflame.¹

What a joyful opening of prison doors the young poet witnessed in those days! The first time the regent sat in his official seat in his cabinet, he called for a list of all the persons then in prison through *lettres de cachet*, — the mere order of the king. Upon inquiring into the causes of their detention, he discovered that in the case of many prisoners no living creature knew any cause, nor was there any record of a cause. They had been simply forgotten! A large number of prisoners did not themselves know, and could not guess, why they had been arrested. The worst case, out of a number of extremely bad ones, was that of an Italian, who had been in the Bastille thirty-three years without knowing why. Thirty-three years before, on the day of his arrival in Paris, he had been arrested and conveyed to the Bastille, and there he had lived and grown old, surviving all his family and friends. When the regent set free all these forgotten victims of priestly arrogance and ministerial intrigue, this poor Italian asked to be allowed to remain in the Bastille; and he lived there, by the regent's allowance, all the rest of his days. But the Duke of Orleans did not abolish *lettres de cachet*, which made these appalling abuses of the royal authority possible, — nay, easy and unavoidable.

The autumn and winter following the king's death, our young poet frequented more than ever the society of the Temple, working zealously also to perfect his play and procure its acceptance at the theatre. It was through his zeal to improve his "Œdipe" and make friends for it that the moth came too near the flame, and had its flight suddenly arrested. He read "Œdipe," one evening, at the abode of a literary and festive member of the Temple coterie, Abbé de Bussi, where, among the guests, were the Abbé Chaulieu and the Grand Prior, then in full intrigue to be reckoned among the princes of the blood royal. Supper over, the young poet read his play, a wonderful work, indeed, for a lad of nineteen to con-

¹ Le Tellier, appointed by the will of the late king confessor to Louis XV., and having nothing to do, owing to the tender age of that monarch, asked the regent what was to be his present distinction. "That is no affair of mine," answered the regent; "address yourself to your superiors." (*Mémoires de Duclos*.)

ceive, — a poem full of spirit and fire, cast in the ancient mould, but containing passages, and even scenes, only surpassed by Racine and Corneille. The old critics favored the young dramatist with their remarks. "That supper," he wrote to Chaulieu soon after, "did great good to my tragedy, and I believe it would be only necessary to drink four or five times with you to produce an excellent work. Socrates gave lessons in bed, and you at table; hence your lessons are doubtless more agreeable than his were." This reading was the more delightful to the Abbé de Chaulieu because he was then seventy-seven years of age, and, from the failure of his eyesight, could scarcely read himself.

Old as the abbé was, his continent and temperate ancestors had put such vigorous life into him that he was in love this winter with a young lady in the service of the Duchess du Maine in the capacity of reader; and when the duchess removed from Sceaux to the Tuileries he had convenient opportunity of paying court to his beloved. The lady (Baroness de Staal) gives us in her *Memoirs* extensive love poems which the amorous old abbé sent her, as well as several anecdotes showing unusual ardor in a lover of seventy-seven. He lent her his carriage every day when she would accept it. He wrote every morning and came every evening. He assailed her with costly presents; and when he reproached her for refusing them, and alluded to the extreme plainness of her attire, she made him the celebrated answer, "I am adorned with all that my costume lacks." The abbé's little lackey, who usually conveyed his tender epistles, came to her one day in sorrow, and told her his master had dismissed him. "Go home," said she, "and tell him you are going to stay, for such is my pleasure." The abbé submitted; the tiger was retained.¹

The abbé could not omit to pay homage to the duchess, who was more than ever disposed to favor literary men, of whom she made use in her struggle to keep her rank. Every kind of writing appeared on behalf of the "legitimated princes," — poems, satires, couplets, memoirs, — the duchess herself lending a hand, and all her court rummaging for precedents in former reigns. "She employed most of her nights in this

¹ *Mémoires de Madame de Staal.*

work," records the Baroness de Staal. "The immense volumes heaped upon her bed, like mountains overwhelming her, made her look, as she said, like the giant buried under Mount *Ætna*." Never was she in better mood to listen to the Abbé de Chaulieu's praises of the wondrous Arouet, and the fine tragedy he was trying to get accepted at the theatre. The poet was presented to her most serene highness; he joined in her moonlight festivals — her "white nights" — at Sceaux; he had the honor of reading "*Œdipe*" to her; and he became one of the frequenters of her "court."

He knew how to adapt himself to such scenes as these, and even at this age he had the art of assuming an equality with these artificial magnates of the world without offending them. No man ever equaled him in this art, and no man ever had so much occasion for it. The Grand Prior, for example, who was of princely rank, was desirous of being styled Royal Highness, instead of plain Highness. It was a stroke of art, as well as wit, in this youth to address him as his Warbling Highness (*son Altesse Chansonnière*). The Marquis d'Argenson, a school-fellow of Arouet, relates this anecdote in his Memoirs, as an instance of "the tone of ease which he always took with great lords;" and it was to the same marquis that Voltaire once explained the secret of his ability to hold this tone.

"Souls," said Voltaire, "communicate with souls, and can measure one another without need of an intermediate body. It is only the greatness or the worth of a soul that ought to frighten or intimidate us. To fear or to respect the body and its accessories — force, beauty, royalty, rank, office — is pure imbecility. Men are born equal and die equal. Let us respect the virtue, the merit of their souls, and despise the imperfections of those souls."

This principle, he said, he had early adopted and practiced. But there was another lesson which he learned later, though he needed it now.

"Doubtless," he continued, "we should by prudence avoid the evil which that physical force can do us, as we should guard ourselves against a crowned bull, an enthroned monkey, a savage dog let loose upon us. Let us beware of such. Let us even endeavor, if possible, to moderate them, to soften

them; but this sentiment is very different from the esteem and respect which we owe to souls."

Elsewhere he gives this maxim: "By having it well *at heart* that men are equal, and clearly *in the head* that externals distinguish them, one can get on very well in the world."

Time passed, and he made no progress with the actors. During the winter he read his play and parts of it to other friends, never weary of retouching it. In the Lent of 1816 he was again a guest at Saint-Ange; "living upon pheasants and partridges," as he wrote in verse to the Grand Prior, "instead of red herring and water-cress, which, in these days, blessed of God, every monk and bigot eats." Again he listened to M. de Caumartin, who "carried in his brain the living history of his time,—all the deeds and all the words of the great men and of the wits, a thousand charming trifles, songs new and old, and the exhaustless annals of the fools of Paris."

In May, 1716, he was in Paris swelling those annals. The press still teemed with writings, in prose and verse, against the regent, most of which, as the regent well knew, were inspired by the Duchess du Maine. He was a good-natured prince, but we know from St. Simon that verses accusing him of monstrous crimes against nature and natural affection cut him to the heart sometimes. One innocent epigram Arouet composed about this time, and how many more we know not. Among other reforms the regent reduced the horses in the royal stables one half. Arouet's epigram intimated that His Royal Highness would do better to dismiss one half the asses that had surrounded his late majesty. There were also couplets and other verses afloat which reflected upon the young widow of the late Duke of Berri, the regent's own daughter. This lady was a conspicuous defier of the conventionalities. Madame de Genlis reports that she herself saw a portrait of the Duchess of Berri as Europa riding upon the bull, painted from life. Be that as it may, there were satirical verses in every hand assuming that she was a woman capable of every excess and every indecorum.

Nothing is more probable than that Arouet gratified the Duchess du Maine by writing satirical poems. "The duchess," says the biographer of the regent (M. Capefigue), "dic-

tated ideas to the poets, and young Arouet was not the last to throw himself into the struggle against the Duke of Orleans." He did not struggle long. Early in May, 1716, the old Marquis of Dangeau made the following entry in his diary: "Little Arouet, a very satirical and a very imprudent poet, has been exiled. He has been sent to Tulle, and is already out of Paris."

The order of exile, dated May 5, 1716, vouchsafed no explanation of the cause: "The intention of His Royal Highness is that the *Sieur Arouet*, the son, should be sent to Tulle." No more. Tulle was then, as it is now, a manufacturing town, nearly three hundred miles south of Paris, — three hundred miles from the theatre, from the Temple, from Sceaux, from Saint-Ange, from everything to which this imprudent poet looked for a career. *Tulle!* What a cutting retort from a regent unable to meet epigram with epigram! Tulle had not yet given its name to a delicate and beautiful fabric which ladies love. In 1716 it was a town of many tan-yards, the savor of which was familiar to the ancestors of our poet, but not on that account the less offensive to him. Candles were made there, and nails, and coarse woolen cloths, and other commodities, of little interest to the author of "*Œdipe*" and the guest of Saint-Ange.

Even Arouet, *père*, deemed Tulle too severe, and it was at his solicitation that the regent changed the place of exile from Tulle to Sully-upon-the-Loire, less than a hundred miles from the theatre of his hopes. Why Sully? Because, said *Maitre Arouet*, the young man has relations there who, "he hoped, would be able by their good advice to correct his imprudence and moderate his vivacity." The youth may have had relations in that region, but he lived during the whole of his exile in a fine old *château* belonging to the Duke of Sully, which Henry IV. had given to the family when the voice of a Sully was second only to his own in the councils of the state. This young man had remarkable luck in falling upon his feet. What better could the Duke of Sully himself do than repair to his *château* on the Loire during the delightful days of May? "I write to you," the poet said to the *Abbé de Chaulien*, after two months' stay at the *château*, "from an abode that would be the most agreeable in the world if I had not been

exiled to it, and where there is nothing wanting to my perfect happiness except the liberty of leaving."

To the Marquise de Mimeure, a lady to whom he had read "Œdipe," he wrote some time after: "It would be delicious for me to remain at Sully if I were only allowed to go away. The duke is the most amiable of men, and the one to whom I am under the greatest obligations. His château is in the most beautiful situation in the world, with a magnificent wood near by. . . . It is quite just that they should give me an agreeable exile, for I am absolutely innocent of the unworthy songs attributed to me. You would be astonished, perhaps, if I should tell you that in this beautiful wood we have some *white nights*, as at Sceaux, in a grand saloon of elms lighted by an infinite number of lanterns, where was served, the other evening, a magnificent supper to the music of a band, followed by a ball of more than a hundred masks superbly attired."

The hunting season filled the château with sportsmen, "who," as he wrote, "spend the lovely days in assassinating partridges." For his own part, he had "some interest with Apollo, but not much with Diana." "I hunt little, and rhyme a great deal." He told his correspondent not to make known his happiness in Paris, for they *might* let him stay at Sully long enough for him to become unhappy there.

But all this time he was scheming to get back to Paris. As it was his pen that exiled him, it was his pen that brought about his return. He wrote a poem, addressed to the regent, in that mingled tone of familiarity and homage which marked his dealings with "the great." He concluded by an adroit allusion to his own case: "Beneficent toward all, to me alone severe, you doom me to a rigorous exile. But I dare appeal from yourself to yourself. Before you I wish no support but innocence. I implore your justice, not your clemency. Do but read these lines, and judge of their worth. See what verses are imputed to me, and see what I write."

He sent copies of this poem to favorites of the regent, asking them to "cast an eye over it," and tell him frankly if it was worthy of such a prince. He begged them to send critical comments upon the poem, that he might improve it to the uttermost of his powers. To one, "It shall not see the light until *you* judge it worthy of publication." To another, "If

I had the honor to be better known to you than I am, you would see that in this composition I speak as I think." These tactics were rewarded with success ; and about the time when great lords, tired of assassinating partridges, came to Paris to pursue fair and featherless bipeds, Arouet also arrived, to resume his efforts to get his tragedy accepted at the theatre.

It was time he had *something* to show in reply to his father's remonstrances ; for he was approaching twenty-three, and was still a hanger-on at the houses of other men, dependent upon his father for all except his lodging. A Duchess du Maine may have given him some golden louis ; princes and princesses did such things then, and poets submitted to accept the bounty, though they usually refrained from recording it.

As a specimen of the songs of which he was accused in these green days, take this upon Madame de Maintenon, which has waited a hundred and sixty years to see the light of print: —

“ Que l’Eternel est grand ! Que sa bonté puissante
A comblé mes désirs, a payé mes travaux !
Je naquis demoiselle et je devins servante :
Je lavai la vaisselle et frottai les bureaux.

“ J’eus bientôt des amants : je ne fus point ingrate ;
De Villarceaux longtemps j’amusai les transports ;
Il me fit épouser ce fameux cul-de-jatte
Qui vivait de ses vers, comme moi de mon corps.

“ Il mourut. Je fus pauvre, et vieille devenue,
Mes amants, dégoûtés, me laissaient toute nue,
Lorsqu’un tyran me crut propre encore au plaisir.

“ Je lui plus, il m’aima : je fis la Madeleine,
Par des refus adroits j’irritai ses désirs ;
Je lui parlai du diable, il eut peur . . . Je suis reine.”¹

The Duke of Orleans did not love Madame de Maintenon, but the regent of France could not allow such verses, aimed at the wife of the late king.

¹ Le Sottisier de Voltaire, Paris, 1880.

CHAPTER XII.

IN THE BASTILLE.

THE Duke of Orleans, regent during the minority of the young king, was forty-one years of age at the death of Louis XIV. He was of medium stature, inclining to stoutness, of open, engaging countenance, rosy-cheeked and black-haired. We may say of him that he deserved to be virtuous, so well disposed was he, so amiable in his demeanor, so affectionate in his family, so attentive to all the ameliorating etiquettes of his rank. In his public capacity he did several wise and liberal actions. He promptly suppressed the odious *Le Tellier*, and stopped the ravages of the Bull *Unigenitus*. He refused even to entertain the proposition of expunging the vast oppressive debt of France by a formal bankruptcy. He lessened the expenses of the court, dismissing, as our *Aronet* saucily advised, a portion of the late king's asses, as well as selling half his majesty's horses.

But one condition of all genuine and lasting success in this world is habitual obedience to the physical laws. Bad men are as much subject to this condition as good men, because violation of those laws is a waste of power. This rosy *Bacchus* of a prince did not comply with the indispensable preliminary. He was a child of his period, — of *our* period, — when so many young men, on discovering that there are errors in the accepted scheme of the universe, assume also that ginger will not burn in the mouth. Add to this his absurd "rank," his pernicious wealth, his perverse education, the example of his ancestors, living and dead, and the force of habit. After living twenty years of mature life with no object but pleasure, suddenly, by a series of deaths which no one could have thought remotely probable, this round and ruddy *Bourbon* finds himself master of France. And of such a France! A fair and fertile land exhausted by the long reign of the

most expensive and incompetent of kings, and required to confront, all at once, a cruel accumulation of evils. The old king was dead and forgotten. The new king was a little boy, shooting sparrows for his amusement. The regent had the honor of serving his countrymen in the character of scape-goat, and in that character his success was complete.

At first he attended to public business with some steadiness and assiduity; but he soon fell into that routine of self-indulgence which gave so much plausibility to the worst calumnies. He began the labors of the day, as his friend, the Duke of St. Simon, sorrowfully records, about two or half-past two in the afternoon, when he entered his dressing-room, took his chocolate, and received "all the world," that is, all the court and nobility who had the *entrée* at the king's *lever*. He chatted familiarly with them for half an hour or more, and then gave formal audience to individuals having business with him. He usually paid, next, a brief visit to the duchess, his wife; and, invariably, once during the day, he went to see the little king in his wing of the palace. The court remarked with pleasure that the regent, both on entering and on leaving the presence of the child, then seven years old, bowed as low and as "reverently" as if the king had been of full age. Frequently he visited his mother, that plain-spoken princess whose wondrous Memoirs complete our knowledge of the later court of the old king; and her also he treated with due respect. He next presided at a short session of the council, and transacted with ministers the indispensable routine of business.

This brought him to five or six o'clock, after which he gave himself wholly up to pleasure. On returning from the opera or the theatre he liked to have a gay and free supper with his familiars, of which the virtuous St. Simon gives us a sorry account. The company at these suppers he justly describes as "strange." The regent's mistress of the hour was sure to be present; sometimes, a number of opera girls; *often*, the Duchess of Berri, the regent's daughter; usually, a dozen men noted for their debauchery or their talents, — dukes, ministers, lords, and poets; also, some ladies of "middling virtue" (*moyenne vertu*). The fare at these repasts was "exquisite." It was cooked in kitchens made on purpose,

adjoining the supper-room, in silver vessels; and often the guests lent a hand to the cooks in preparing some of the dishes. The conversation was the freest possible, and spared no one, living or dead, present or absent, man or woman. Such a supper, at which the best wine in the world flows free, cannot but become at last a noisy, vulgar debauch; and, doubtless, our Polonius, St. Simon, uttered only the literal truth when he wrote, "They drank deeply and of the best wine; they grew warm; they talked shamelessly with uncovered bosom, and strove which could utter the grossest impieties; and when they had made some noise, and were very drunk, they went to bed, to recommence on the morrow." From the moment of the regent's sitting down to supper until the next morning, he was "barricaded" against all approach of business. He would see no one, and receive no message, upon the most pressing affair of state, even though it concerned his own immediate safety.

To increase the ill effect of this example, he trampled upon the most cherished decorums of his country, having sometimes a wilder orgy than usual on such a day as Good Friday, — a thing which even bad Catholics usually avoid. Robust and capable of enduring great excesses, he had a particular admiration for men who could go farther than himself in debauchery. "I have heard him," says St. Simon, "express ceaseless admiration, carried to the point of esteem, for the Grand Prior, because he had gone to bed drunk for forty years, had always kept mistresses openly, and spoken continually against piety and religion." The old king, indeed, once said of him: "Do you know what my nephew is? He is a braggart of crimes which he does not commit."

A prince who lives so in the sight of a distressed and anxious people will be taken seriously, and will be accused of offenses far worse than those he commits. The old king brought the kingdom to the verge of ruin; he drove from it the most valuable citizens it possessed; he suspended the growth of its intellect; he prepared the way for evils from which France has not yet ceased to suffer; he was to France all the harm and hindrance an individual could be. But he observed the decorums; he was studious of appearances. Every day he went to mass; his mistresses were ladies of

rank; he never passed any woman of any degree without a courteous salutation; he exacted and observed every etiquette. He never appeared except to dazzle or impress; he was the histrionic king to perfection; and to this day he stalks across the historic scene in his favorite character of the "Grand Monarque," much to the satisfaction of many spectators.

The regent, on the contrary, was most harshly judged. Even his doting fondness for his daughter, the Duchess of Berri, received from the lying scribblers of the time the worst conceivable interpretation, and a hundred epigrams insinuated that he had destroyed by poison the many lives that had till lately interposed between himself and the supreme power. There never lived a man less capable than he of such enormities; but accusations of that nature were the inevitable penalty of a disregard of appearances in so conspicuous a personage, and there were powerful individuals interested in making the regent odious.

Among the scurrilous things circulating from hand to hand in Paris, in the spring of 1717, was an inscription, in school-boy Latin, of the following purport:—

A BOY REIGNING;
A MAN NOTORIOUS FOR POISONINGS
AND INCESTS ADMINISTERING;
COUNCILS IGNORANT AND UNSTABLE;
RELIGION MORE UNSTABLE;
THE TREASURY EMPTY;
PUBLIC FAITH VIOLATED;
INFURIATE WRONG TRIUMPHANT;
DANGER OF GENERAL SEDITION IMMINENT;
THE COUNTRY SACRIFICED
TO THE HOPE OF A CROWN;
AN INHERITANCE BASELY ANTICIPATED;
FRANCE ABOUT TO PERISH.

This inscription was probably appended to a drawing of some kind,—a weeping figure of France, perhaps, or of a monumental structure. Under a paternal government nothing of this nature can be too trifling for official notice, and, accordingly, the "Puerio Regnante," as the inscription was called from its opening words, was considered by the ministry, as well as eagerly scanned and circulated in society.

Another piece had a much wider circulation, and made its way even into the provinces. The French know better than any other people how to catch the attention of readers languid from a satiety of sweets; and, among their other devices, there is one of beginning every verse or stanza of a poem with the same word or words. This piece was so arranged, nearly every line beginning with *J'ai vu*, "I have seen;" and hence the poem was commonly called the "I-have-seens." These are specimen sentences, from which the reader will perceive that the poem was written by a Jansenist:—

"I have seen the Bastille and a thousand other prisons filled with brave citizens, faithful subjects.

"I have seen the people wretched under a rigorous servitude.

"I have seen the soldiery perishing of hunger, thirst, indignation, and rage.

"I have seen a devil in the guise of a woman [Maintenon] ruling the kingdom, sacrificing her God, her faith, her soul, to seduce the spirit of a too credulous king.

"I have seen the altar polluted.

"I have seen Port Royal demolished.

"I have seen the blackest of all possible acts, which the waters of the entire ocean could not purge, and which remote posterity will scarcely be able to believe,—bodies stamped with the seal of immortality removed by profane and sacrilegious hands from that sojourn of gracious men, Port Royal.

"I have seen the prelacy sold or made the reward of imposture.

"I have seen nonentities raised to the highest rank.

"I have seen— and this includes all— the Jesuit adored.

"I have seen these evils during the fatal reign of a prince whom formerly the wrath of Heaven accorded to our ardent desires.

"I have seen these evils, and I am not twenty years old."

This poem was written by A. L. le Brun, the author of the words of a long-forgotten opera and other hack work of that day. It had been circulating for some months, and as yet the detectives of the police had not discovered the writer. They were equally at fault in their chase after the author of the "Puero Regnante." But every knowing finger in Paris pointed to Arouet as the probable author of both these effusions, and certainly of the "I-have-seens." Had he not been exiled last year for something of the kind? Was he not living, after his return from exile, in furnished lodgings, and not

at his father's house? Did he not frequent the apartments and the châteaux of the disaffected? And was he not notorious for satire? True, he was nearly twenty-three years old, instead of not twenty; but few people knew his age, and he was supposed to be imprudent enough for much less than twenty.

In vain he denied being the author of the "I-have-seens," which was running in his name before he had so much as heard of it. As he was passing through a small country town, — probably on his return from a visit to Saint-Ange, in the spring of 1717, — the literary people of the place insisted on his reciting to them this poem, which they said was a masterpiece. "It was useless," he records, "for me to assert that I was not the author, and that the piece was miserable. They would not believe me, but admired my reticence; and I thus gained among them, without thinking of it, the reputation of a great poet and a very modest man."

Pursuing his journey, he reached his abode in Paris, where business of the utmost importance awaited him. His "Œdipe" had been accepted at the theatre! It was about to be put into rehearsal; the coffee-houses were expecting it; great lords and ladies were interested in its production. Soon after his arrival he had a visit from one of those gentlemen, much employed by the regent, who were then called spies, but to whom we now apply the politer word, detectives. This individual, Beauregard by name, a captain in the French army, was a coffee-house acquaintance of the poet. Those were the halcyon days of the coffee-house on both sides of the Channel, — the days when Mr. Addison held court at Button's, and Fontenelle was the oracle at Laurent's. The regent kept spies frequenting those haunts, and so Captain Beauregard obtained the right to drop in upon Arouet, at the Green Basket, on the Island, Rue de la Calandre, near Notre Dame. Beauregard's official report of the conversation has been preserved, but it does not read like truth: —

AROUET (lounging on a sofa). — "Anything new?"

BEAUREGARD. — "A number of things have appeared against the Duke of Orleans and the Duchess of Berri."

AROUET. — "Are any of them considered good?"

BEAUREGARD. — "There is thought to be much wit in them, and

they are all laid to you. For my part, I do not believe it; it is impossible to write such things at your age."

AROUET. — "You are mistaken in supposing that I am not the author of the works that have appeared during my absence. I sent all my things to M. le Blanc; and, to put the Duke of Orleans off the scent, I went into the country during the carnival, and stayed two months with M. de Caumartin, who saw those writings first; and afterwards I sent them to Paris. Since I cannot get my revenge upon the Duke of Orleans in a certain way, I will not spare him in my satires."

BEAUREGARD. — "Why, what has the Duke of Orleans done to you?"

AROUET (springing to his feet in a rage). — "What! You don't know what that b—— did to me? He exiled me because I let the public know that that Messalina of a daughter of his was — no better than she should be."

The interview here ended; but, the next day, the spy called again at the Green Basket, and found, sitting with the poet, the Count d'Argental, who was to remain his devoted friend for sixty years. The spy took from his pocket-book a copy of the "Puero Regnante."

AROUET. — "What have you got that's curious?" (Recognizing the inscription.) "As to that, I wrote it at M. de Caumartin's, but a good while before I left."

Two days after, the assiduous spy called once more, and again found M. d'Argental with the poet.

BEAUREGARD. — "How is this, my dear friend? You boast of having written the 'Puero Regnante,' and yet I have just heard, from very good authority, that it was written by a Jesuit professor."

AROUET. — "It is of no consequence to me whether you believe me or not. Those Jesuits are like the jay in the fable: they borrow the peacock's feathers with which to decorate themselves."

The spy further reported him as saying everywhere in Paris that the Duchess of Berri was gone to a hunting lodge in the Bois de Boulogne to be confined, and as uttering a "quantity of other things unfit to be recorded."¹

If the young man made these avowals, which is doubtful, he must have done so by way of burlesque. He probably did not write the "Puero Regnante." If he wrote it, it is

¹ *La Jeunesse de Voltaire*, page 129.

the only composition in the hundred volumes of his works in which no trace of the Voltairian quality can be discerned. But the spy's report of the conversations served as a basis to the subsequent proceedings. Scurrilous compositions fluttered in every drawing-room. The regent knew that the "court" of the Duchess du Maine was the source of much of this hostile literature, and it was believed that Arouet was "the soul of that society." The duchess herself was the soul of it, and there is no reason to think that Arouet was trusted or employed by her in her political schemes. We know, however, that those who administer paternal governments are content with slight evidence when a victim is very much wanted and their spies are off the true scent.

There is a tradition that he had a warning of what was in store for him. On an afternoon in May he was strolling in the gardens of the Palais-Royal, when some one summoned him to the presence of the regent, who was also walking there.

"Monsieur Arouet," said the regent, "I bet I will make you see something you have *never* seen!"

"Indeed, and what is it, Monseigneur?"

"The Bastille," replied the regent.

"Ah, Monseigneur," said the poet, "I consider it seen!"

It may have been on this very Friday, May 14th, that he saw the Czar Peter of Russia, then on one of his tours for improvement. The Czar had been a week in Paris, hurrying from shop to shop, from lion to lion, himself the lion of the year to the people of Paris. This was one of his busiest days: at six in the morning in the grand gallery of the Tuileries, examining plans and maps; then to the Louvre; next to the garden of the Tuileries, from which all other visitors were expelled, and where he lingered to admire a swinging bridge; dinner at eleven; after dinner a visit to Madame at the Palais-Royal; then to the opera with the regent, where he sat in the grand box and called for beer, and the regent gave him the beverage with his own hands; finally, to supper with the Duke de Villars and other military men. Our poet saw the Czar as he was going the rounds of the shops; "neither of us," as he wrote forty years later, "then thinking that I should one day be his historian."

The next morning, Saturday, May 16th, Arouet, not so early

a riser as the Czar, was roused from sleep at his lodgings, at the sign of the Green Basket, by a strange noise on the stairs. Arrests upon *lettres de cachet* were made with the utmost suavity of manner, but with a considerable show of force ; and half a dozen men cannot ascend a staircase without waking a sleeping poet. Upon opening his eyes he saw the crowd at the foot of his bed, one of whom drew near, touched him upon the shoulder with a white wand, and with all possible politeness explained their business ; perhaps handing him a slip of paper, on which it was briefly stated : —

“The intention of His Royal Highness is that the Sieur Arouet be arrested and conducted to the Bastille.”

He was allowed, it seems, to go to his dressing-room, and, while he and his valet were getting on their clothes, one of the officers sealed up his papers, and another took an inventory of his effects. It so chanced that the spy Beauregard, who had given the information upon which the arrest was made, “found himself present” on this occasion, also, and had further conversation with the unsuspecting victim.

“Why are you arrested?” he asked.

“I know nothing about it,” the prisoner replied.

“My opinion is,” said the spy, “that your writings are the cause.”

“There are no proofs that I have written anything, for I have never confided my writings to any but true friends.”

“Is there nothing in these papers to convict you?”

“No ; for, luckily, the exempt did not get hold of the pair of breeches in which there were some verses and songs. I seized an opportunity, while I was dressing, to throw them where — it won't be easy to find them.”

So reports the spy, and it is possible some conversation resembling this occurred. The place indicated was searched, to the extreme discomfiture of the inmates of the Green Basket, and to the spoiling of several barrels of beer in its cellar ; but no scrap of offensive writing was found. He was permitted to take with him no article whatever except the clothes he wore ; but before leaving he managed to dash upon paper and send (probably by his valet) a short note to the Duke of Sully, who had so happily alleviated his late exile : —

“M. de Basin, lieutenant of the short robe, is here to arrest

me this morning. I can tell you nothing more about it. I know not what I am accused of. My innocence assures me of your protection. I shall be too happy if you do me the honor to accord it to me."

That done, he was conducted down-stairs to the street, assisted into a close carriage, the lieutenant following, and driven slowly away, a file of men walking on each side of the vehicle, and the passers-by looking on with serious countenances. By the tortuous streets of old Paris the cortège must have gone a mile and a half before it reached the Bastille, and the prisoner could see through the blinds of the coach the ancient fortress rising gloomy and vast from the banks of the Seine.

"Who goes there?" cries the nearest sentinel.

"Command of the king," replies the sergeant of the escort.

An officer of the guard appears, to whom the *lettre de cachet* is shown; upon seeing which he strikes a bell to summon the officials of the château, and permits the whole cortège to enter the first inclosure. The guard turns out; the officials stand ready; the coach comes to a stand. The lieutenant of the king opens the door of the carriage. Every soldier covers his face with his hat, so as not to see the prisoner, and if by chance there is some one in the court who has no hat on he turns his back, or instantly withdraws. The prisoner alights. He is the king's guest; this is one of the royal châteaux; and he is conducted with the utmost respect to the office of the governor, who gives a receipt to the commander of the escort, and presents him to officers of his own. They conduct the prisoner into the next room, where he is respectfully but thoroughly searched, deprived of every article he possesses which does not strictly belong to his apparel, and an inventory is taken.

He was obliged, as we have seen, to surrender at least one letter from his Olimpe, then an unhappy Baroness de Winterfield; he a less unhappy prisoner of state. A good pocketful of money was found upon him: "six louis of gold" and a dozen or more of other coins, besides "an eye-glass, a pair of scissors, a bunch of keys, tablets, and some papers." After he has signed the inventory, he is taken back to the governor's room, where he is formally handed over to the officers of the Bastille.

The draw-bridge falls; he is led across it; he enters the grand inclosure; the gate closes; he is in the Bastille. Under-officers show him to an eight-sided room in one of the towers, shut the door upon him, turn the huge key, drive home the bolts, and leave him to his reflections, with ten feet of solid and ancient masonry between him and the bright May-day world of Paris.¹

They gave him a pretty good room; not one of the suites reserved for princes and favorites, but a room of fair size, in the lower story of one of the towers, which had been tenanted by a Duke of Montmorenci, by a Biron, by a Bassompierre, and in which De Saci had translated the Bible. From this time onward, as long as the Bastille stood, it was shown to visitors as Voltaire's room. It had a fire-place, and the occupant could add anything to the scanty furniture that he chose. He was the king's guest; the king maintained him, but if a guest had a fancy for particular articles of furniture, there was a dealer who had bought at a high price the privilege of supplying them at a high price.

The king gave his guests an excellent table; nay, a luxurious one. Marmontel's treatment, so amusingly described in his Memoirs, was that of many prisoners during the last century of the Bastille's reign. It was cold when Marmontel entered: the valets of the château made him a blazing fire and brought him plenty of wood. He objected to the mattresses: they were changed. A very good Friday dinner was served, with a bottle of tolerable wine, and, after he had eaten it, he was informed that it was meant for his servant. His own dinner followed: "Pyramids of new dishes, fine linen, beautiful porcelain, silver spoon and fork, an excellent soup, a slice of juicy beef, the leg of a broiled capon swimming in its gravy, a little dish of fried artichokes, one of spinach, a very fine pear, some grapes, a bottle of old Burgundy, and some of the best Mocha coffee." His servant, on seeing this banquet, said, "Monsieur, as you have just eaten my dinner, allow me in my turn to eat yours." "It is but just," replied his master, and the valet entered upon the work.

We may conclude, therefore, that Arouet did not have to

¹ Archives de la Bastille. Par François Ravaisson, Introduction, page xv. Paris. 1866.

wait long for his breakfast on the morning of his arrest, and that he had on that day, and every day, whatever was requisite for his bodily comfort. Indeed, we know that he dined sometimes with the governor. Almost every literary man of note who lived in the reign of Louis XV. was at least once a prisoner in the Bastille, and they agree in describing it as the least painful of prisons. There were but forty-two rooms in the structure, and many of them were usually vacant. There was much familiar intercourse between the prisoners and the officers of the château, and most of the prisoners, as it seems, received visitors in their rooms, and were allowed to keep a private store of wine and dainties for the entertainment of guests. They could send out for books, published with permission. There was a billiard-room, a bowling-alley, and a large court-yard for exercise and conversation, to all of which most of the prisoners had some daily access. Persons accused of serious crime, or who had given offense to a favorite or a mistress, were treated with more severity; were compelled to take their exercise alone, under the eye of a sentinel; were confined to their rooms, and could not receive visitors. For contumacious or disorderly inmates there were dungeons, damp and dark, at the bottom of each of the eight towers; but these were seldom used, and never except for short periods. The form of a *lettre de cachet* was in harmony with the mild regimen of the château. A person of rank was invited thus to the king's hospitality:

“MY COUSIN: As I am by no means satisfied with your conduct, I send you this letter to inform you of my intention, which is that, as soon as you receive this, you shall proceed to my château of the Bastille, there to remain till you have my further orders. On which, my cousin, I pray God to have you in his holy keeping.”

M. Delort, among the papers discovered by him in “grocers' shops and second-hand bookstores,” found what appears to be the original entry on the secret books of the Bastille of Arouet's arrest and its cause:—

“François-Marie Arouet, without profession, son of the Sieur Arouet, payer of the Chamber of Accounts, entered the Bastille May 17, 1717, accused of having composed some pieces of poetry and insolent verses against Monsieur the Regent and Madame the Duchess of

Berri; among others a piece which has for inscription 'Puerdo Regnante.' Accused also of having said that, since he could not revenge himself upon Monsieur the Duke of Orleans in a certain way, he would not spare him in his satires; upon which, some one having asked him what His Royal Highness had done to him, he rose in a rage, and replied, 'What! You do not know what that B. has done to me? He exiled me because I made the public see that his Mesalina of a daughter was no better than she should be.' Signed, M. d'Argenson; Deschamps, clerk; Ysabeau, commissioner; Basin, exempt of the short robe."¹

The bird is literally caged at last. His cage is of eight stone sides and a vaulted roof, furnished with a plain table, two rush-bottomed chairs, and a narrow bed. His family, as we are told by Duvernet, was in desolation.

"I foresaw clearly enough," cried his much-enduring father, "that his idleness would lead to some disgrace. Why did he not go into a profession?"

His Jansenist of a brother probably added a hearty served-him-right to his father's I-told-you-so. The old Marquis de Dangeau made another entry in his diary concerning this young man: "Arouet has been put into the Bastille. He is a young poet accused of writing very imprudent verses. He was exiled some months ago. He seems incorrigible." St. Simon apologizes to himself for recording so trivial a circumstance: "I should not mention here that Arouet was put into the Bastille for writing some most audacious verses, but for the celebrity which his poems, his adventures, and the caprice of the public have given him since. He is the son of my father's notary, whom I have often seen bringing papers to sign. He could never do anything with that libertine son of his, whose very libertinage made his fortune at last under the name of Voltaire, which he assumed to hide his own." Thus Polonius upon this plebeian Laertes.

Meanwhile, Laertes, as usual with him in all circumstances, was making himself as comfortable as possible. He was arrested on Saturday morning. On Thursday following we find him signing a receipt for certain articles needful to complete the equipment of a young gentleman and scholar, namely, "two volumes of Homer, Latin-Greek, two India handkerchiefs, a

¹ 2 Histoire de la Détention des Philosophes, 24.

little cap, two cravats, a night-cap, a small bottle of essence of cloves." Other effects had doubtless preceded this small conveyance, and he could send for more if the articles were not prohibited. It is not certain that he was the sole occupant of his room, for others of the Duchess du Maine's partisans were arrested about the same time, and the château may have been overfull. Be that as it may, there *he* was, with his Homer, his night-cap, and his small bottle of essence of cloves, a prisoner in one of the massive towers of the old Bastille, with a deep slit for a window, through which neither earth nor sky could be seen.

CHAPTER XIII.

ELEVEN MONTHS A PRISONER.

WAS he, as tradition reports, denied pen, ink, and paper in the Bastille? We have no letter of his written in that royal château, nor any other composition certainly known to have been put on paper there. At first, and perhaps for some weeks, he may have had no writing materials, the improper use of which was the offense charged against him. Diderot was refused them in later years; but he made a passable ink by scraping slate into wine, using a broken wine-glass as an inkstand, cutting his quill tooth-picks into pens, and writing on blank pages, as well as between the lines of wide-printed books. What a Diderot did an Aronnet could do. He probably wrote in the Bastille; and probably enjoyed, during the latter part of his time, tolerable facilities both for study and composition.

When first he found himself immured in his eight-sided room, all the brightness of the world shut out, he threw himself (as Duvernet reports from the lips of Thieriot) upon his epic poem, "La Henriade," tumultuously planned at the more agreeable château of Saint-Ange. He began to compose in his mind, without waiting for pen and paper, and soon became, as usual with him, wholly possessed by his subject. Duvernet declares that the second canto, in which Henry of Navarre relates to Queen Elizabeth of England the Massacres of St. Bartholomew, came to the captive in a dream, perfect and entire, just as it now stands in the work, — the only canto which he never altered nor corrected. Honest Wagnière, his last amanuensis, asserts the same thing: "He told me that he composed the second canto of 'La Henriade' in his sleep, that he retained it in his memory, and never found anything to change in it."¹

¹ 1 Mémoires sur Voltaire, par Longchamp et Wagnière, page 22.

Frederic of Prussia probably heard the poet relate something similar, but in the funeral oration which he pronounced upon Voltaire he does not repeat the marvel. "Could you, gentlemen," said the king, "have imagined that it was at the Bastille that our young bard composed the first two books of his 'Henriade' ? Though strange, this is true. His prison became his Parnassus, to which the Muses resorted. It is equally true that the second book is now what it appeared in this first copy. Not having paper or ink, he learned the verses by rote, and retained them in his memory."¹

Many writers have had similar experiences, and will therefore be able to believe a portion of this prodigy. In the early days of his incarceration, intensely absorbed in the attempt to go on with his poem without the means of writing, his health at low tide and his rest imperfect, he may have really dreamed out the narrative of St. Bartholomew, — a story, as he well says, which makes "the pen drop from the hand."

Some substitute for pen and ink coming, then, to alleviate the tedium of his days, the eleven months that he passed within the walls of this old fortress were not the least happy of his life, and were among the most profitable. How incomplete and misleading his education hitherto ! This long seclusion gave him time to reflect, as well as labor. He discerned, as he afterwards said, that in France a man is born either hammer or anvil. Basking in the smiles of a Duchess du Maine, or sitting down to a supper of princes, he may have been weak enough to fancy himself hammer ; but, pacing his stone octagonal in the Bastille, it was but too evident that he was nothing but anvil. If he hardened himself to bear inevitable blows, it was not his intention to remain anvil any longer than he must. "I patiently endured," he wrote, a year or two later, "the rigor of an unjust imprisonment ; but I knew how to draw from my misfortune some advantage : I learned to harden myself against adversity, and I found in myself a fortitude not to be expected from the lightness and the errors of my youth."²

¹ 13 Posthumous Works of Frederic II., King of Prussia, page 492. London, 1789.

² *Épître à M. de Genonville.* 17 *Œuvres de Voltaire*, 49.

His chief gain was intellectual. Besides working upon the poem with all his own fiery ardor, he appears to have read and considered some important books, and he may have met in the château men of more mature character than himself. In his burlesque romance, "L'Ingénu," he consigns the hero to the Bastille, and gives him an experience there which may have been drawn in part from his own recollections. L'Ingénu is a young Frenchman reared among the Hurons of Lake Ontario, who comes to France at maturity, ignorant of the usages of civilization, and wholly "unformed." In the Bastille he meets a thoughtful and learned Jansenist, with whom he daily converses upon the highest themes. "The old man knew much, and the young man wished to learn much." He studied geometry with passion, read works upon physical science, such as there were then in France, and took up Malebranche's treatise upon the "Search after Truth," a work which suggested much that Voltaire applied. "What!" exclaims the Huron, "we are deceived to such a point by our imagination and our senses!" But when the young man had finished the work, he concluded that it was easier to destroy than to construct, and that Malebranche had torn down with his reason, and built up with his imagination and his prejudices. At last, the aged Jansenist asks him what he thinks of the soul, and of the 'great question of grace and free-will which had tormented France so long. The young man from Lake Ontario answered this question precisely as Voltaire always answered it: —

"I think nothing. If I have a thought upon it, it is that we are under the power of the Eternal Being, as the stars are, and the elements; and that he works by general laws, and not by particular views."

Then they read history together, which saddened him; for it was but a record of mingled crime and misery. And yet the spectacle of mighty Rome, "conqueror and lawgiver for seven hundred years, through her enthusiasm for liberty and glory," absorbed and fired his soul. They ran through the dark and bloody history of the church, not failing to note the words of Justinian: "Truth shines by its own light; human minds are not enlightened by the flames of the fagot." The young man becomes the teacher, and the old Jansenist, in the

presence of the sublime truths of science and the sorrowful facts of history, discerns, at length, the puerility of all sectarian controversies. Literature, poetry, drama, art, — all passed in review before them; and as the days, the weeks, the months, rolled on, the young man found the Bastille almost a happy abode.

Something of this happened to our captive. He increased his knowledge; he exercised his powers; he gathered himself for new attempts; and during many long days and silent nights he repeated his canto of St. Bartholomew. Nothing, it seems, could occur to this young man which did not, in some way, deepen his sense of the baleful effect of intolerance.

“Religion, raging with inhuman zeal,
Arms every hand, and points the fatal steel.
To me, however, it will least belong
To prove the Roman or Genevan wrong.
Whatever names divine the parties claim,
In craft and fury they are both the same.”¹

He was, nevertheless, in the Bastille, with a fine tragedy ready for presentation, and a literary career dependent upon its success. His friends outside were not idle. Le Brun, the author of the “I-have-seens,” was found, and he, in the presence of a cabinet minister, and “with tears of contrition in his eyes,” confessed himself the author of that harmless work. The captive himself lent a helping hand by composing a comic poem upon his arrest, which was well calculated to propitiate a regent who made light of the usages of the church. The Saturday of his arrest happened to be the day of Pentecost, on which the Roman Catholic church celebrates the “descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles.” He used this circumstance with an audacity that was calculated to make the regent, the grand prior, and both their supper-tables shake with laughter, and Jansenists shiver with affright. He makes his valet, who had come home drunk the evening before, cry out, on hearing the noise on the stairs of the approaching band, —

“Master! The Holy Ghost is out there! It is he, and no mistake, for I have read in my book that he comes into people’s houses with a thundering racket!”

¹ La Henriade, canto ii.

Roused from sleep, the master sees at the foot of his bed, "not a pigeon nor a dove, the Holy Spirit's tender and faithful bird, but twenty crows, ravenous for their prey." The whole poem is in this taste. It calls to mind the light audacities by which Byron, a century later, rescued cakes and ale from the ban of virtuous Southey.

These measures, in the spring of 1718, promised to be successful, and the captive poet had hopes of looking again upon the sky and the gardens of the Palais-Royal. It was at this time that he determined to make an alteration in his name, by appending to it, after the fashion of his country, a name appertaining to the family of his mother. He had not succeeded well with plain Arouet, and he would henceforth court fortune as Arouet de Voltaire. Arouet was then, apparently, pronounced as though it were written Arroi, an anomaly which caused him to be confounded sometimes with a poet named Roi, now forgotten, but then notorious and odious for low, satirical verse. Much ingenuity has been expended upon the derivation of the word Voltaire. A writer in "Le Derby," a French sporting paper, has the honor of settling this unimportant controversy. While investigating, in 1869, the pedigree of a French horse, he came upon the records of a family named Voltaire, and the family proved to be ancestors of our prisoner's mother.¹ The gentle parent, therefore, who gave him his talent, supplied him also with the name by which that talent became known.

Nothing is less unusual in France than such changes as these. Molière himself dropped the paternal name of Poquelin; and really it is much to be desired that when a man enters upon the work of immortalizing his name he would be considerate enough to provide himself with a name fit to be immortalized, one which posterity will take pleasure in pronouncing. Our poet did not formally drop the name of his family. He entered the Bastille, May 16, 1717, François-Marie Arouet; he came out of the Bastille, April 11, 1718, Arouet de Voltaire. The Arouet, however, soon wore off, and it finally appeared only in legal documents.

Prisoners released from the Bastille were ordered into exile. This prisoner was "relegated to the village of Châtenay, near

¹ Pall Mall Budget, February 26, 1869.

Sceaux, where his father, who has a country-house in the village, offers to retain him." To Châtenay, accordingly, he was driven on leaving the château of the Bastille, and there he remained. It was not his intention to take up his abode at that agreeable sojourn. When he had been at his father's house four days, he wrote to the lieutenant of police, thanking him for having procured his release, adding, "I think I have profited by my misfortunes, and I venture to assure you that I am as much indebted to His Royal Highness for my imprisonment as for my liberation. I have committed many faults; but I beg you, sir, to assure His Royal Highness that I am neither such a knave nor such a fool as ever to have used my pen against him. I have never spoken of that prince but to express my admiration for his genius."

To the Count de Maurepas, minister of the regent, May 2d, two weeks later: "I do not ask you to shorten the period of my exile, nor for permission to pass one hour in Paris. The only favor I solicit is that you will be so good as to assure His Royal Highness that I am as much obliged to him for my imprisonment as for my liberty, and that, as I have profited by the one, I shall never abuse the other. All appearances being against me, I have had no reason to complain of the regent's justice, and all my life I shall praise his clemency. I can assure you, as if I had to answer for it with my head, that . . . I have never even seen the abominable inscription attributed to me, and had not the least share in composing any of the songs against the court."

To Count de Maurepas he wrote again, after an interval of only four days, but in a very different strain. He seems to have discovered, meanwhile, the "perfidy" of the spies who had denounced him, and to have obtained proofs of the same. He now implores, with all the fervor of passionate desire, permission to go to Paris for two hours, that he might speak to the count for a moment, and "throw himself at the feet of His Royal Highness." Permission was granted, and he came. He had an interview with the regent, and, as it appears, made a very favorable impression upon him.

"Be prudent," the prince is reported to have said to him, "and I will take care of you."

The reply of the poet is one of his famous sallies: "I

should find it very good if his majesty should be pleased henceforth to charge himself with my board, but I beg your Royal Highness not to trouble yourself farther with my lodging."

This reply ought to have made a livelier impression than it did upon a good-natured regent. But this prince, self-indulgent Bourbon as he was, kept business and pleasure distinct. He never told a state secret to a mistress, and he did not allow his witty exile to live in Paris until six months after his release from the Bastille. There was, indeed, little obstacle to his occasional visits, but it was not until the 12th of October, 1718, that permission was formally accorded to "le Sieur Arouet de Voltaire to come to Paris whenever he pleases."

CHAPTER XIV.

“ŒDIPE” PERFORMED.

HIS tragedy is at last in rehearsal at the Théâtre-Français. That “Œdipe,” which he had begun five years before, and read so often to princesses, comrades, and critics, is announced for production in November, and the poet is established at Paris none too soon.

He had written this play in the spirit of an artist formed and necessitated to succeed. It was at one of the noble and beautiful *fêtes* of the period, given to the Duchess du Maine, that he conceived the idea of writing a tragedy upon this oft-used theme. The duchess on that occasion assisted at a representation of the “Iphigenia” of Euripides, translated into French at her request by M. de Malézieu, herself playing the part of Iphigenia. The young poet was deeply moved by the austere majesty of the play.

→ “At that time [as he afterwards told the duchess] I had no familiarity with our French drama, and it did not enter my mind that an affair of love could be mingled with that tragic subject. I yielded myself to the manners and customs of Greece so much the more easily from scarcely knowing any others, and I admired the antique in all its noble simplicity. This performance it was which gave me the first idea of composing my tragedy, before I had even read the ‘Œdipe’ of Corneille. I began with translating, by way of experiment, the famous scene of Sophocles, which contains the mutual confidence of Jocaste and Œdipe. I read it to some of my friends who went often to the theatre, and to some actors. They assured me that the scene could never succeed in France; they urged me to read Corneille, who had carefully avoided it; and they all agreed that if I did not follow his example, and put a love affair into ‘Œdipe,’ the actors themselves would not accept my work. I then read the ‘Œdipe’ of Corneille, which, without being regarded as equal in merit to his ‘Cinna’ and ‘Polyeucte,’ had then much reputation. I confess that the play revolted me from one end to the other; but it was nec-

essary to yield to precedent and to bad usage. In the midst of the terror of that masterpiece of antiquity I introduced, not an affair of love, — that idea appeared to me too shocking, — but at least the recollection of an extinct passion.”¹

And when he had written his play his troubles were far from being at an end. Among the papers of Father Porée, his Latin master at the Collège Louis-le-Grand, was found after his death a letter of 1729, in which the young dramatist mentioned some of the other obstacles he had been obliged to encounter.

“Young as I was [wrote the pupil to the master], I composed ‘Œdipe’ very nearly as you see it to-day. I was full of the reading of the ancients and of your lessons, and, knowing very imperfectly the Paris stage, I worked almost as if I had been at Athens. I consulted M. Dacier,² who was of that country. He advised me to put a chorus into all the scenes, after the manner of the Greeks; which was like advising me to walk in Paris wearing Plato’s robe. It was all I could do to induce the actors of Paris to perform the chorus that appeared only three or four times in the play; and I had even more trouble to get them to accept a piece devoid of love. The actresses laughed at me when they saw that there was no part for the amorous lady, and they found the scene of the twofold confidence between Œdipe and Jocaste (drawn in part from Sophocles) entirely insipid. In a word, the actors, who were then coxcombs and great lords, refused to play the piece. I was extremely young. I believed they were right. To please them I spoiled my tragedy by mingling sentiments of tenderness with a legend to which they were so unsuited. When they saw a little love in the play they were less dissatisfied with me, but they would not tolerate in the least that grand scene between Jocaste and Œdipe; they ridiculed, at once, Sophocles and his imitator. I held my ground; I gave my reasons; I set some of my friends at work; and, after all, it was only through the influence of important persons that I induced them to play ‘Œdipe.’ There was an actor named Quinault who said openly that, to punish me for my obstinacy, the piece ought to be played just as it was, including that bad fourth act taken from the Greek. Besides, they regarded me as a presumptuous person to dare treat a subject with which Pierre Corneille had succeeded so well. Corneille’s ‘Œdipe’ was at that time considered an excellent work. I deemed

¹ 6 Œuvres de Voltaire, 156.

² The celebrated translator.

it a very poor work, and I dared not say so. I did not say it till ten years had passed, when the public was of my opinion." ¹

But now, owing to the good word of the Prince de Conti and other appreciators of the poet, all difficulties were overcome, and the polite world of Paris was expectant of the sensation of a new play by a new poet: a poet just out of the Bastille; a play of which great things were said and mischievous things were whispered in high circles.

Voltaire himself tells us what a first night then was to the graceful idlers of Paris, — thirty thousand persons, as he computed, in a population of half a million. Cabals became active for and against the new play. There were intrigues for the possession of a box, and by noon of the great day the theatre was filled with valets keeping seats for their masters. The piece was judged before the curtain rose on the first act. Women argued with women; dandies with dandies; cliques with cliques. The cafés filled early in the day with people disputing the merits of a production which none of them had seen. Crowds gathered in the street waiting for admission to the parquette. Bets were made, and the fate of the piece was foretold by a throw of the dice. The actors trembled, the author also; and all his friends were anxious and astir.²

On some occasions, when partisans were unusually excited, each spectator was asked, as he entered the parquette, "Do you come to hiss?" "Yes." "Then sit over there." But if he answered, "I come to applaud," he was directed to the other side. Thus the two belligerent bodies were massed for more effective action.³

The hour has come. It is Friday, November 18, 1718. The house is crowded; the candles are snuffed; the ladies glitter with jewelry. At that time, and as late as 1759, spectators were allowed both to stand and sit upon the stage; nay, to lounge about, converse, and even smoke. The same dread of the audience which makes our performers nightly submit to the imposition of encores, and destroy illusion by acknowledging applause, preserved this abuse for a century, against the rebuke and ridicule of every lover of the dramatic

¹ Voltaire to Père Porée. January 7, 1729.

² Voltaire to his niece, Madame Denis. March 3, 1752.

³ 16 Œuvres de Voltaire, 268.

art. Four rows of benches on each side, one behind and above the other, had now replaced the primeval stools, and formed upon the stage a kind of amphitheatre, which was enclosed by a gilded railing. On important nights like this there would also be a row of seats outside the railing, as well as a solid mass of spectators standing at the back of the stage, through which the actors forced their way to the front.¹ Garrick in England, Voltaire in France, forty years later, cleared the stage of this absurd incumbrance, to the great relief and joy of all concerned.

Imagine, then, an interior not very large, not too brilliantly lighted, crowded with people, all dressed in the showy colors and picturesque garments of the time, with a narrow strip of stage in the midst thereof, upon which the terrible legend of Œdipus is to be presented, set to the music of French rhyme. The audience was homogeneous, at least. There were no "groundlings" to be conciliated, nor "gods" to be kept quiet; for, at that period, the industrial people of Paris only went to the theatre on certain festive days, when the king paid for all. Dealers in lemonade moved about among the spectators. The rosy regent may have been there with a mistress conspicuous at his side, and the duchess, his wife, may have also been present in her own box, not far off. A chronicler of the time mentions seeing at this very theatre, in the Palais Royal, in 1720, the regent, with *one* of his mistresses seated next to him, and on the other side of the house, "Monsieur le Duc," the prince next in rank to the regent, also with his mistress sitting beside him.²

A more pleasing tradition is that Maître Arouet, the much-enduring father of the poet, was among the spectators. The young man himself was behind the scenes, suffering the pangs which all authors know, and, as it seems, affecting the gayety that young authors sometimes affect on such occasions.

The bell rings to notify the audience that the curtain is about to rise, and that all must leave the theatre who do not intend to witness the performance. To those who go out, if any do, their money is returned. This strange custom accommodated people who only came to see the assembly and

¹ 7 Journal de Barbier, 160.

² 1 Journal de Marais, 495.

converse with acquaintances. On first nights, however, there were few such visitors, or none. The curtain rises. The Prince of Eubœa enters, followed by his convenient friend, Dimas, both dressed in the mode of Paris, *anno* 1718, with swords at their sides, precisely similar to those worn by every gentleman in the audience. The first couplet gives the keynote : —

“ Philoctète, est-ce vous ? Quel coup affreux du sort
 Dans ces lieux empestés vous fait chercher la mort ? ”

Among the last things reached by a student of the beautiful language and noble literature of France is an appreciation of the rhymed tragedies of the elder dramatists, Corneille, Racine, Voltaire. We have, first of all, to forget Shakespeare, and all Shakespearian methods. We have also to pass through a process similar to that by which a country youth learns first to endure, then forgive, and, finally, love the Italian opera; or that process by which a performer of the “ Battle of Prague ” on the piano comes to dote upon a Wagnerian opera, — a beautiful legend, gliding slowly by to the sound of heavenly music.

A French tragedy of the old style is a spoken opera, a series of stately, rhymed dialogue, relieved by little action, burdened with much narration; the decisive events being usually told, not exhibited. There is scarcely any attempt at naturalness or verisimilitude; there are commonly no forms of salutation or farewell; and there is nothing approaching a jest. The first words are fraught with the agony of the theme; the story moves on with little interruption; and there are few passages of an independent beauty, such as “ Mercy is twice blessed,” and the suicide soliloquy in “ Hamlet.” The villains are conscious villains, and expatiate upon their villainy with a simplicity that amuses; but the good are wholly and romantically good. In Shakespeare there is always the powerful legend, but there is also a varied exhibition of human character. In the old French tragedy the legend dominates, fate is supreme, and the characters are little individualized. Such, however, is the charm of literary art, that these tragedies retain a place in the world’s literature, and will perhaps be read, performed, and loved after most of the subsequent drama of France has faded forever from the memories of men.

This “Œdipe” of Voltaire’s held and thrilled the audience. With much of the excellence of his two great predecessors, he possessed an effectiveness all his own, and he provided his actors with an extraordinary number of “points,” which gave them easy opportunities of winning applause.

All plays that play well, from “Hamlet” to “The Hunchback,” have one quality in common, and only one, — they afford the actors good chances to display their talents. People go to the theatre to see acting, and the dramatist’s part in the enterprise is to provide opportunity for acting. Voltaire performed this duty, and did not disdain to insert some passages of the kind which are now styled local hits. Since the play turned upon incest and parricide, the enemies of the regent came to the theatre expecting allusion to the infernal imaginings of base minds then current in Paris. They pretended to find what they sought; and the play contained allusion enough of other kinds, intended by the author.

Thunders of applause followed the delivery of a powerful passage in the first scene, which reminded auditors of their beloved little king, eight years old, and of the fine example set him by his elders: “The friendship of a great man is a boon from the gods. What had I been without *him*? Nothing but a king’s son! Nothing but a common prince! I should have been, perhaps, the slave of my senses, of which he has rendered me the master!”

The friends and the enemies of the regent, the friends and the enemies of the Duchess du Maine, the friends and the enemies of the king’s tutor, Fleury, were all equally *obliged* to applaud this passage. In the same act there were some lines that appealed to the people who were relenting toward the memory of the late king, and remembered with shame how his funeral rites had been slighted: “Kings while they live are obeyed, even in things belonging to the other world. Adored by their subjects, they are gods themselves. But after their death, what are they in your eyes? You extinguish the incense that you burned to them; and, as the human soul is controlled by interest, the virtue which is no more is instantly forgotten. The blood of your king rises up against you!”

And again, when Jocaste exclaims, “Incest and parri-

cide!" the ill-disposed could not but think of a prince popularly accused of both. For the sect of the unbelievers, already numerous and zealous, there were two titbits, one of which was vehemently applauded: "Our priests are not what the foolish people think them; our credulity makes all their science."

There was a point, too, in the fourth act, which recalled the parade adopted during the last two reigns whenever the king appeared to the public, — "a hedge of soldiers" lining both sides of the street. The reduction of the twelve thousand royal guards was a topic of the day.

ŒDIPE. — "When Laius undertook that fatal journey, had he any guards, any soldiers, with him?"

JOCASTE. — "I have told you already that one man alone went with him."

ŒDIPE. — "Only one man?"

JOCASTE. — "That king, greater than his rank, disdained, like you, a wearisome pomp. Before *his* chariot the gorgeous rampart of a numerous battalion was never seen marching. In the midst of subjects submissive to his authority, as he was without fear, he went his way without defense. By the love of his people he believed himself guarded."

Such passages as these, though they could not have saved a dull play, added greatly to the success of this truly powerful one. The fourth act profoundly moved the audience, and the interest was well sustained to the end. The chorus, sparingly used, had a happy effect, and gave variety as well as dignity to the performance.

Tradition reports that in the last scene, when the high priest and the chorus have the stage almost to themselves, the author, hilarious with his triumph, seized the pontiff's train, and came in view of the spectators still bearing it. Madame de Villars, who saw this extravagance, asked, "Who is that young man trying to damn the play?" Upon learning that it was the author, she conceived a high opinion of his magnanimity, and had him presented to her. The acquaintance thus formed lasted long, and had important consequences.

Maître Arouet, so runs the tale, did not listen in silent rapture to the fervid verse of his troublesome offspring. "Ah,

the rogue! Ah, the rogue!” he is said to have muttered from time to time during the performance, and ended by crying outright at the fourth act.

One brilliant anecdote of this great night the author himself recorded, fifty-five years after, in a letter to La Harpe. His grand lady friends kept telling him, during the evening, how superior his piece was to that of Corneille on the same subject. The young poet, always loyal to his great forerunners, always a modest author, contrived, by a happy quotation from Corneille himself, to accept the compliment, and, at the same time, pay becoming homage to the father of French tragedy. He quoted the lines from Corneille’s “Pompey” which the victorious Cæsar pronounces over Pompey’s dead body: “Remains of a demi-god, never can I equal thy great name, thy conqueror though I am!”

“Restes d’un demi-dieu, dont jamais je ne puis
Egaler le grand nom, tout vanqueur que j’en suis.”

(Acte V., Scène 1.)

It was a pretty story to run from box to box, from drawing-room to drawing-room, from château to château, in those first weeks of a new-born fame. Subsequent representations confirmed and enhanced the triumph of the opening night. Both the partisans of the regent and those of the Duke du Maine had an equal interest in promoting the run of the play. According to the biographer of the regent, every point was “applied and applauded” by both parties alike, while the author affected not to perceive the existence of the strife, and induced the regent to attend a performance with his daughter, the Duchess of Berri. That princess, he adds, came “five nights in succession to see the play, as if to brave public opinion.” People spoke of the Regent-Œdipe, and of his daughter as Berri-Jocaste.¹

The good-natured prince held his ground, and heaped honors upon the fortunate author. He presented him, in the king’s name, with a massive gold medal. The original record of this transaction exists in the great Library of Paris: “December 6, 1718. Given to the Sieur Arouet a gold medal, representing on one side the King, and on the other Monseigneur the Duc d’Orleans, Regent, amounting to the sum of six hun-

¹ Philippe d’Orleans, par M. Capefigue, page 394.

dred and seventy-five livres ten sous.”¹ The duke publicly conversed with the author at the next opera ball. The subject of their conversation was Rabelais, whose works the regent extravagantly praised, which caused the young man to think ill of the prince’s taste. “I had then,” Voltaire says, “a sovereign contempt for Rabelais,” from which he long afterwards recovered, on learning more of the times and circumstances in which Rabelais wrote.² More than all this, the regent permitted the tragedy to be performed in the Tuileries for the amusement of the boy-king. This last was the crowning triumph of the poet. The Marquis de Dangeau, who disposes of great affairs of state in four lines, devotes to this event a considerable paragraph:—

“Saturday, January 11, 1719, the drama of ‘Œdipe’ was played at the king’s palace, when Madame de Berri sat beside him in grand toilette, and all the ladies who were in the king’s view were in grand toilette also. But those who were upon the steps behind the king, and in the galleries, were in their usual clothes. The piece was much applauded. The ambassadors of the emperor, those of the king of Portugal and the king of Sardinia, were present. Although the room was small, there was a large company, and very great order was observed.”

The play was performed forty-five successive nights,—a run not previously equaled on the French stage; and it remains to this day a stock piece, played whenever there is an actress capable of personating the ill-starred heroine. The author, as he tells us, was present every night, watching both the performance and the audience, and learning something of his art from both. “Each representation of my ‘Œdipe’ was for me a severe study, in which I gathered the approval and the censures of the public, and studied the public taste to form my own.” Yet he would not always admit the correctness of the public verdict; he remained dissatisfied with the first scene of the fourth act, though it was the one that nightly produced the greatest effect.

The poet pushed and utilized this first success in every possible way and to the uttermost degree. In a few days

¹ *Jennesse de Voltaire*, page 158.

² Voltaire to Madame du Deffand, October 13, 1759.

after the opening night he was ready with an edition of the tragedy, which bore a most flattering "approbation" from the official censor, the poet La Motte. "The public, at the representation of this piece," said La Motte, "promised itself a worthy successor of Corneille and Racine; and I believe that at the reading of it it will abate nothing of its hopes." With audacious tact, the author dedicated the play to the Duchess of Orleans, the regent's mother, telling her in his epistle that, if the usage of dedicating literary works to the best judges of them were not already established, it would begin with Her Royal Highness, the protectress of the fine arts, the example and the delight of France. He prefixed to the play several letters, gossipy and critical, in which he discoursed upon his late mishap in being suspected of having written a parcel of stuff entitled "I Have Seen;" and he let the public know that His Royal Highness had deigned to acknowledge his innocence and to compensate him for his detention. He descanted at some length upon the "Œdipe" of Sophocles, upon that of Corneille, and upon his own, comparing their faults and merits with interesting candor; conceding the general superiority of his two predecessors, but not concealing his just opinion that, in the matter of "Œdipe," it was M. Arouet de Voltaire who had treated the legend most suitably to modern tastes. A swarm of pamphlets fluttered from the press in response, some defending the Greek poet, others the French. The Prince de Conti wrote a poem in honor of the new play and poet, in which he said that the new treatment of the old theme was such as to make people think either that Racine had come back from Hades, or else that Corneille in Hades had corrected his style. "Monseigneur," said Voltaire to the prince, "you will be a great poet; I must get the king to give you a pension,"—a good example of the "tone of ease" which he took with the lords of the earth. He also addressed a poem to the prince, which contains something more and better than the usual eulogium. He sent a copy of his play to George I. of England, with a swelling sonnet addressed to the monarch, and another copy to the Duke and Duchess of Lorraine (the lady being a sister of the regent), with a modest stanza.

The author's share of the profits of the performance appears

to have been about four thousand francs, to which must perhaps be added a thousand crowns, said to have been given him by the Duke of Orleans, and part of the proceeds of the sale of copies. He was a capitalist! We begin to find intimations in his correspondence that he possessed bonds and shares. "A good part of my property is in the India Company," he writes in these weeks to a lady. All the world was buying shares in one or the other of the schemes of John Law. Making money was coming into fashion, and it was a very good time for a notary's son to go upon the street with a few thousand francs of good money in his pocket. He had something better even than money, namely, a permit, a privilege or monopoly of some kind from the regent, upon which a money-making enterprise was founded, and in speaking of which he takes the tone of the director.¹

¹ 1 Lettres Inédites de Voltaire, 2, 3.

CHAPTER XV.

FROM CHÂTEAU TO CHÂTEAU.

THOSE were happy days. There are few keener delights enjoyed by mortals than a genuine literary success, whether the motive of the author be public or personal. I have heard a poet of our own time say, apropos of Dante's "Paradise," that he could imagine no bliss of disembodied spirits greater than that of publishing, every three or four years, a little volume which should pervade the civilized world, and cause that world to give back to the author a glance of sympathetic recognition. A dramatic triumph is, perhaps, the most thrilling of all the forms of literary glory, since it is one which the author can himself nightly witness and vividly feel.

Voltaire at this time had two comrades to share and increase his happiness, with whom he had many a gay ride into the country, and many a merry supper in town after the play. One of these was a young man named De Génonville, to whose "manes" he afterwards addressed the well-known Epistle. The other was Mademoiselle de Livri, whom he had met at the château of the Duke of Sully, where she served as *femme de chambre* to the duchess, and played comedy parts in the little theatre of the château. Voltaire, struck with her talent, and perhaps attracted by her personal charms, gave her lessons in the dramatic art, and promised to use his interest in procuring her a *début* upon the stage of Paris. The success of "Œdipe" now gave his recommendation so much weight that the young lady was in Paris in the spring of 1719, rehearsing the important part of Jocaste in the new tragedy, which was to be revived after Lent. Hence the gay rides and the merry suppers of the three inseparables — Voltaire, De Génonville, and "Égérie."

"You remember the time," Voltaire sings to the "manes" of his old friend, "when the amiable Égérie, in the beautiful

days of our life, heard our songs and shared our enthusiasms. We three loved one another. Reason, folly, love, the enchantment of the most tender errors, — all bound together our three hearts. How happy we were! Even that poverty of ours, sad companion of bright days, could not poison the current of our joy. Young, gay, content, without care, without forethought, limiting all our desires to the delights of the present moment, what need had we of a vain abundance? We had richer possessions: we had the pleasures.”¹

Such was his remembrance of those months, after ten years had rolled over his head. [For a time, it seems, the poet was in love with his engaging pupil, and gave her his portrait, which has been preserved to this day. She came at last to prefer De G nonville; Voltaire also was drawn away by a more potent attraction; and these are, as we may conjecture, the “tender errors” of which the poet speaks. One of his own tender errors of that too brief period of joy was intrusting a leading part in high tragedy to a young girl from the country before she had learned to pronounce her native tongue in the Parisian manner. When “ dipe” was revived after Lent, Mademoiselle de Livri appeared in the part of the Queen, and with the greater prestige from being represented by the scandal of the day as the *ma trese* of the author. Her failure was complete and hopeless. Some provincial peculiarities of pronunciation provoked laughter, and she was so manifestly unequal to the part that, on the third night, it was resumed by the excellent actress who had originally performed it.

The author of the play was not long in discovering “the justice” of the public verdict; but on the fatal evening he was extremely indignant. Observing one of the actors, Poisson, joining in the general laughter, he assailed him with a volley of abusive words. At the end of the performance (so the gossip of the day reports), Poisson waited for him at the door of the theatre, and challenged him. The author declining the combat “against an actor,” Poisson threatened to assault him with his cane, and the poet is said to have complained to the police, and caused the actor to be thrown into prison, from which he was released through Voltaire’s own intercession. Malign gossip asserts that this intercession was itself a piece

¹  p tre aux Manes de M. de G nonville, 1729; 17  uvres de Voltaire, 82.

of histrionic performance. Mademoiselle de Livri resumed her comedy parts, and was heard of on the Paris stage no more. Her subsequent career in the world surpassed in startling surprises and splendid transformation scenes any comedy in which she ever performed. Meanwhile, exit *Égérie*, and the gay trio is dispersed, never to be merry together again.

Who has ever tasted dramatic success without courting the muse a second time? The poet had already fixed upon a theme for another tragedy,—*Artemire*, queen to *Cassander*, a king of the time of *Alexander the Great*. In the composition of "*Œdipe*," he had been aided by previous versions of the awful legend, and owed the supreme effect of the play in the fourth act to the genius of *Sophocles*. His purpose now was to produce a work which should be wholly his own, including the story,—a feat which a dramatist of his rank has rarely attempted. It was a tale of an innocent queen and an absent husband made jealous by false accusations, which he discovers to be false just after he has received his death wound. He began to compose this piece with his usual ardor, when he was once more exiled from Paris.

The regent continued to live in the self-indulgent manner described above, and the hostile faction continued, also, to intrigue and calumniate. Three short poems, called "*The Philippics*" (the regent's name was *Philip*), appeared in Paris in the spring of 1719, in which the worst scandals concerning the regent and his court were recounted in verse so melodious and effective that to this day "*Les Philippiques*" rank as part of the classic literature of France. They had such an immediate circulation all over the country that it seemed the effect of systematic exertion. The French are curiously susceptible to the charm of versification, and, in the dawn of freedom, there is a propensity to exaggerate the faults of rulers. These *Philippics* repeated the hackneyed insinuations with regard to the regent and his daughter, the *Duchess of Berri*, and distinctly accused him of a design to poison the boy-king, his nephew. This regent committed grievous faults; his daily life was shameful; but he was a fond father and uncle, and as incapable of the crimes imputed to him as any gentleman in Europe. A moralist might aver that he had done worse things than those of which he was accused,

but he had not done those. It was, perhaps, more injurious to France for him to live as he lived, and prepare for that boy the moral atmosphere which his example and policy did prepare for him, than to slay him outright, and seize his crown. But, in his own way, he loved the little king, and performed punctiliously every duty towards him which the moral feeling of that court demanded. These scandalous poems cut him to the heart. He heard of them some time before he saw them, and often asked to see them; but, as St. Simon records, no one dared show him compositions "which contained all that hell can vomit, both of false and true, expressed in the most beautiful verse." At length he demanded them with such urgency that St. Simon was obliged to obey, declaring, as he handed the sheet to the regent, that as for reading the poems he would never do it. The passage in which the Duke of St. Simon describes the scene that followed is one of the most famous in the memoirs of that age, and it may serve to show us what misery anonymous cowards often inflict when they assail with poniard pen the defenseless chief of a nation: —

"The regent then took the leaf and read it to himself, standing in the window of his little winter cabinet, where we were. He found it, as he read along, to be such as it was, for he stopped now and then to speak to me about it, without seeming to be much moved. But, all at once, I saw him change countenance, and turn toward me, tears in his eyes, and almost overcome. 'Ah,' he said, 'this is too much; this horror is stronger than I.' He was at the place where the scoundrel showed the Duke of Orleans designing to poison the king, and near accomplishing his crime. It is the passage in which the author redoubles his energy, his poetic fire, his invocations, the frightful and terrific beauties of his verse, hideous pictures, touching portraiture of youth, the king's innocence, the hopes he gave, his appeals to the nation to save a victim so precious from the murderer's barbarity: in a word, all that the literary art has of most delicate and most tender, of most powerful and most black, of most stately and most moving. I wished to avail myself of the mournful silence of the duke to take away that execrable paper, but could not succeed. He poured forth just complaints of a calumny so abominable; he uttered expressions of tenderness for the king; then he wished to finish the reading, which he again, and more than once, interrupted to speak of it to me. Never have I seen a man so penetrated, so deeply moved, so overwhelmed with an injustice so enormous and sustained.

For my part, I was beside myself. The most prejudiced persons, provided they were disinterested in their prejudice, if they had seen him then, would have yielded to the obvious certainty of his innocence and the horror of the crime in which he was plucked. I could scarcely recover from the shock, and I had all the trouble in the world to restore him a little."¹

The author of those poems, La Grange-Chancel, a noted dramatist of the day, wrote them, as it seems, merely to avenge a private literary wrong, committed not by the regent, but by one of the regent's favorites. As he had previously published nothing equal to them in force or malignity, suspicion passed him over, and fell upon Voltaire, recently from the Bastille, and still a frequenter of disaffected circles. He had been much with Baron de Goëtz, minister and emissary of Charles XII., intriguer, sham financier, adventurer, whose schemes included the restoration of Stanislas to the throne of Poland, James II.'s return to England, and, perhaps, a change in the dynastic arrangements of Spain and France. In his "History of Charles XII.," Voltaire explains these designs in many pages, and gives the baron's character in one line: "What his master was at the head of an army, Goëtz was in the cabinet." Among his other bold projects, he had formed the design to capture the author of the new "Œdipe," and bear him off to grace the court of the king of Sweden, who, it was said at the time, "did not know what a poet was." The bullet that pierced the brain of the Swedish king, December 11, 1718, put an end to the projects of his minister; and, a few months after, the Swedes brought him to trial and cut off his head for the double crime of inflating their paper and debasing their coin. It was from the Baron Henri de Goëtz that Voltaire derived part of the information which enabled him, by and by, to write his "History of Charles XII." All was fish that came to the net of this young man, ever curious to know the more hidden causes of public events.

He was "suspect." The bullet just mentioned had the most surprising and remote effects. It shut up the Duchess du Maine and her court in the Bastille, and it was among the causes of Voltaire's receiving a polite official intimation in May, 1719, that he had better pass the fine season in the

¹ 16 St. Simon, 259, Paris, 1877.

country. The public, not the regent, believed him to be the author of the "Philippiques;" he had been an open frequenter of the society of intriguers who surrounded the bed of the Duchess du Maine; he had been a comrade of the beheaded Goërtz. It was enough. A storm was heard one day crashing along the horizon, filling Paris with dust and noise. "The kingdom of heaven, *too*," said he, "must have fallen into regency;" and, with this light word to amuse the saloons he left behind him, he took his unfinished play and his unfinished poem with him, and spent the rest of the year in the provinces. "At present," he writes to the Marquise de Mimeure, "I am at Villars. I pass my life from château to château."

Villars was the country-house of the veteran marshal of Louis XIV.'s later wars, the Duke of Villars, a personage of great note and splendor during the regency. The new play of "Artemire" did not advance rapidly under the roof of this old soldier. Again our inquisitive author had daily access to one of the sources of history, and again a public man found in him a listener untiring and sympathetic. Many of the most effective anecdotes in Voltaire's "History of the Age of Louis XIV." are preceded by, "I have often heard the Marshal de Villars say," or, "The Marshal de Villars assured me;" and it was during this and subsequent summers, while going about among the châteaux of France, that he obtained and recorded those anecdotes. The veteran loved to fight his campaigns over again, quite as well as his guest loved to hear him do so. - But it was not this that retarded the new play. The Duchess de Villars, much younger than her husband, a handsome, luxurious woman, had accepted it as her vocation to disarm the jealousy arising from her husband's too rapid promotion, by being agreeable to all the world. It was she who had summoned Voltaire to her box on the opening night of his "Œdipe," and been gracious to him in the susceptible hour of his triumph. She was too agreeable to him. He was fascinated. He conceived for her "a grand passion," which for some months, as it appears, absorbed and confused his life, suspending even the power to labor, his usual resource in all times of trouble. She played with him, tradition reports; never returning his love, but permitting him to hope and lan-

guish. It cost him a long and severe struggle to conquer this passion, but he did conquer it, and found relief at last in resuming his work. He was accustomed to express contrition for his weakness on this occasion; not, indeed, for having made love to an old soldier's wife under that old soldier's own roof, but because a fruitless passion had caused him to lose so much time! He wrote to his friend, Madame de Mimeure, in the true tone of the disappointed and hopeless lover: —

“You make me feel that friendship is a thousand times more precious than love. It seems to me that I am not at all made for the passions. **I** find something ridiculous in *my* being in love, and I should find it more ridiculous in those who should be in love with me. It is all over. I renounce it for life.”

He wrote, also, a very pretty, but very saucy epistle, in verse, to the object of his passion, complaining of her insensibility to his devotion. He concludes thus: “The Future, in reading this work, since it is made for you, will cherish its delineations. This author, readers will say, who painted so many charms, had for his share only some little suppers, where the guests drank very freely; but he deserved more.” All of which was in accord with Ninon de Lenclos's maxim, that “love is a pastime, involving no moral obligation,”—the falsest thing, perhaps, which words ever uttered.

From château to château. This expression describes his way of life for many years,—nay, for the greater part of his existence; for he was near sixty years of age before he was settled in a château of his own. From Villars he went to his old quarters at the house of the Duke of Sully; thence to Villars again; often to the magnificent abode of the Duke of Richelieu, filled with evidences of the profusion and taste of the great cardinal; going the round of the great houses; always, however, keeping rooms in Paris for himself and his old comrade, Thieriot; often writing to his Paris friends, both in prose and verse.

His enforced absence from Paris during the latter half of 1719 saved him from the danger of being drawn into the vortex of ruin resulting from the schemes of John Law, inventor of money-making, who brought upon frugal France the catastrophe of an inflated currency, one of the greatest

a nation can suffer. Law had been four years at work upon the finances of the country, and the result was eight months of delirium, — June, 1719, to February, 1720, — followed by a collapse more woful and lasting than any other country has since suffered from the practice of Law's methods.

2. Louis XIV. died in 1715, leaving behind him an empty treasury, a vast debt, and more than a thousand millions of depreciated paper, worth about twenty-seven per cent. of its nominal value. Law sold shares in his various schemes on these terms: one quarter of the price in coin; three quarters in the king's paper, *at its nominal value*. Frugal, cautious France hesitated; but Law was an advertiser of genius, fertile in expedients, unscrupulous; and, at last, the shares sold, and that great flabby volume of paper, held by princes, lackeys, servants, merchants, clerks, everybody, began to swell, and went on swelling, until it reached par, and, still rising, brought a premium, and people sold solid family plate to get the means of buying paper. Our poet knew not what to make of the reports that reached him from Paris. He had seen, as he tells us, this Scotchman become French by naturalization, from Protestant become Catholic, from adventurer to be lord of fine estates, from banker to be minister; he had seen him arrive at the Palais-Royal, "followed by dukes and peers, marshals of France and bishops;" and, now that he was absent from Paris, every post brought tidings more marvelous still.

"It is a fine thing, my dear friend [he wrote to his little De G nonville, from the ch teau of Villars], to come into the country, while Plutus is turning every head in town. Have you really become all lunatics at Paris? I hear nothing but millions spoken of. They say that all who were well off are in misery, and that all the beggars swim in riches. Is it a reality? Is it a chimera? Has half the nation found the philosopher's stone in paper-mills? Is Law a god, a scoundrel, or a quack who poisons with the drug which he distributes to all the world? Are people content with imaginary wealth? It is a chaos which I cannot see through, and of which, I imagine, you understand nothing. For my part, I give myself up to no other chimeras than those of poetry."

A few months later, when the mania to "realize" had supplanted the mania to speculate, the true character of these

operations was revealed. One hundred thousand persons, it was computed, were ruined ; business in France lay paralyzed ; and moral harm was done, from which the world has suffered ever since. A new disease was generated by John Law, which occasionally rages in every land like an epidemic, the accursed itch of getting wealth by a rise in values, by "corners," and other similar devices. A memorial of that time is the city of New Orleans, founded in 1718 by Law's company, and named by him in honor of the regent. The Pitt diamond, that still glistens among the national jewels of France, where it is called "the Regent," is also a memento of John Law, who persuaded the virtuous Duke of St. Simon to recommend the regent to buy it for two millions of francs. With how little wisdom great kingdoms were governed ! The regent, strange to say, objected to make this purchase, on the ground that the country was deep in debt and could scarcely pay its troops. Stranger to say, St. Simon, one of the few disinterested and irreproachable gentlemen about the court, was vehement for the purchase. He admitted that a large number of persons to whom the government was indebted were suffering for want of their money, and he praised the Duke of Orleans for sympathizing with them ; but he maintained that the finances of "the greatest king in Europe" ought not to be managed like those of a private person. The honor of the crown must be considered, and an opportunity, which could not return, of acquiring a priceless gem that would "efface" the diamonds of all Europe ought not to be let slip. It would be a glory for the regency that would endure forever. The regent yielded ; and, to his surprise, as well as ours, the public applauded the acquisition. The patriotic Duke of St. Simon, to his dying day, cherished it among his dearest recollections that it was he, and no other man, who had persuaded the Regent of France to buy (on credit) a diamond as large as a Queen Claude plum, nearly round, colorless, flawless, spotless, weighing nearly five hundred grains. He styles it "an illustrious purchase" (*une emplette illustre*).¹

The Law mania was at an end in February, 1720, when Voltaire was allowed to remain at Paris to superintend the

¹ 14 St. Simon, 13. Paris, 1877.

rehearsals of his new play, "Artemire." He pronounced the epitaph of "the System," as Law's finance was called, when he remarked that "paper was now reduced to its intrinsic value."¹

The curtain rose upon "Artemire" for the first time February 13, 1720, at the worst moment of the collapse, to a house yielding five thousand one hundred and sixty-seven francs. The play had been read at Sully, at Villars, and elsewhere, with the applause invariably bestowed by friendly circles upon works submitted to their judgment. The Abbé de Bussi attended a reading of the play by the first actress of the time, Madame Lecouvreur, and cried to such an extent that he caught a cold from his own tears. The friends of the author were present in force. Happily for art, the public, just master of us all, has no friends; but pays its money, and lets the author know, to an absolute certainty, whether it has or has not received an equivalent in pleasure. "I told the author," says a letter of the day (Brossette to J. B. Rousseau), "that this tragedy, in which he had nothing to depend on but his own genius, would not have the destiny of his 'Œdipe.' It is too much work at once, especially for a young man, to have to invent the plot, the characters, the sentiments, and the arrangement, to say nothing of the versification." And so it proved. The opening lines, melodious and strong, were applauded:—

"Où, tons ces conquérants rassemblés sur ce bord,
Soldats sous Alexandre et rois après sa mort,
Fatigués de forfaits, et lassés de la guerre,
Ont rendu le repos qu'ils otaient à la terre."²

The passage opened the play happily, and seemed to promise a worthy presentation of a great period. But the story was fatally defective, and could not interest. The action was slow, the characters were hateful, the heroine unattractive, the hero absent. Powerful passages and epigrammatic lines cannot retain attention, nor long disarm censure. Before the end of the first act, ominous hisses were heard; and during one of the later scenes the noise and contention were so violent that

¹ Duvernet, chapter iv.

² "Yes, all these conquerors assembled on this shore, soldiers under Alexander and kings after his death, sated with crimes and tired of war, have given back the repose of which they deprived the earth."

the author — so tradition reports — sprang from his box to the stage, and addressed the spectators. As soon as he was recognized, we are told, the confusion subsided, and the rest of the play was listened to without interruption. He perceived, however, as soon as he saw his play through the eyes of an audience, that the story was weak beyond remedy, and he resolved to withdraw the piece from the stage. The mother of the Duke of Orleans, who was well disposed towards him, and to whom he had dedicated his first play, desired to see it performed again. He employed ten days in altering it. The piece was better received than before, and was repeated eight times, with some applause, to diminishing audiences; until, on the 8th of March, 1720, it was presented for the last time to a house of two thousand three hundred and fifty-three francs. The stringency of the times may have had something to do with the failure. The author, however, refrained from publishing his piece, used some of its lines in other plays, and left nothing of "Artemire" but fragments and scenes.

The regent had discovered, meanwhile, the true author of "Les Philippiques," and was inclined, as it seems, to atone for exiling the wrong poet. Voltaire caused some cantos of "La Henriade" to be copied for him in Thieriot's best handwriting; and, besides accepting these, the regent heard the poet himself read some passages of the poem. The partial failure of his play may have abated his self-confidence a little, and made him over-sensitive to criticism; for it was at this period that, on hearing some friends criticise with unusual freedom his "Henriade," he suddenly cried out, "It is only fit to be burned, then," and tossed it into the fire. The President Hénault, who was one of the critics on this occasion, relates what followed: —

"I ran after him, and drew the manuscript from the midst of the flames, saying that I had done more than the heirs of Virgil when they refrained from burning the *Æneid*, as Virgil had recommended, since I had snatched from the fire 'La Henriade,' which Voltaire was going to burn with his own hands. If I wished, I might glorify this action by recalling to mind that beautiful picture by Raphael, in the Vatican, which represents Augustus preventing Virgil from burning the *Æneid*. But I am not Augustus, and Raphael is no more."

Hénault handed the manuscript back to the author, saying, "Do not think the poem better than the hero whom you celebrate. Despite his faults, he was a great king and the best of men." So "La Henriade" was saved. "Do you remember," the president wrote, years after, "that your poem cost me a pair of lace ruffles?"

Voltaire's friend and comrade, De Gémonville, whom he had known in the days when both were copying law papers in the office of the solicitor Alain, died suddenly this spring, to Voltaire's lasting sorrow. The Duchess of Villars, to distract his mind from sombre thoughts, took him away with her to her country-house, which was always full of company in the fine season, and thus he resumed his life of wandering from château to château. From Villars he wrote in June to Fontenelle, an amusing letter, — half in prose, half in verse, — in which he tells the veteran author that his work on the "Plurality of Worlds" was keeping the ladies out-of-doors a great part of the night observing the stars, much to the displeasure of the gentlemen, who were obliged to humor and accompany them. "As we pass the night," he added, "in observing the stars, we greatly neglect the sun, not returning his visit until he has run two thirds of his course." He did not forget the interest excited in the gay company of the château by Fontenelle's popularization of astronomical science.

CHAPTER XVI.

BEGINNINGS OF HIS FORTUNE.

FROM the gay and brilliant life of the château he was summoned, in December, 1721, to the bedside of his father, dying of dropsy in Paris. The incongruous family of the Arouets was once more assembled in their old home, — Armand, François-Marie, their sister Marguerite, and her husband, M. Mignot, of the Chamber of Accounts. The family letters of Voltaire have not been preserved, and, consequently, we know little of the terms upon which these ill-assorted relations lived. Armand, the elder son, a bachelor thirty-eight years of age, had developed into a religionist of the most credulous and abject type. He was one of the *dévôts* of that age, who wore hair shirts, fasted in Lent to a perilous extreme, believed in the “miracles” of the day, and gave money profusely to any Tartuffe who knew how to play his part. François, on the contrary, had become the man-of-the-world of the period, sobered a little by his twenty-eight years, as well as by his arduous, though desultory, pursuit of his vocation. Their sister was a married woman with children, always dear to her younger brother.

What the old man thought at this time of his fool in prose and his fool in verse we can infer from the manner in which he disposed of his property. December 29, 1721, two days before his death, he resigned his office in the Chamber of Accounts, then yielding thirteen thousand francs a year, to Armand, his eldest child; charging him, however, as it seems, with part of the portions of his other children. To Voltaire he bequeathed property yielding an annual revenue of four thousand two hundred and fifty francs. Both these sons had reached the years of discretion, but, as their father thought, only the years, — not the discretion. He feared that his fool in prose would waste his substance upon Jansenist devotees,

and that his fool in verse would waste his life among the grandees whom he amused. He accordingly confided his estate to a trustee, M. de Nicolai, president of the Chamber of Accounts, and gave him unusual powers. He made him, in fact, guardian of his sons, as well as trustee of his property; and M. de Nicolai, we are told, "adopted both the brothers, and continued to regard Voltaire as his son" long after his duty as trustee was performed.¹

These arrangements made, the old man, on the first day of the year, 1722, breathed his last, and on the next day, as the parish record shows, he was followed to the grave in Paris by his two sons and his son-in-law.

There was, as Voltaire intimates, a brief revival of tenderness among the members of the family on this occasion, followed by increased estrangement of the brothers. M. de Nicolai, their guardian, was a personage of old descent and high rank, one of the *noblesse de robe*, not accustomed to be in haste, and he was four years in giving each his share of the paternal estate. Voltaire, as his letters show, fretted under this delay, threatened an appeal to the law, seems actually to have brought a suit of some kind; and, although he came to his inheritance at last, his circumstances for the time were not improved by his father's death. He had even lost the possible asylum of his father's house, and, as yet, possessed no secure status of his own. The regent, probably, had this view of the case presented to his consideration. A few days after the funeral of the poet's father, "Le Mercure," a Paris gazette of the time, published the following notice:—

"M. Arouet de Voltaire, the death of whose father was recently announced, has obtained from the king, through the recommendation of the Duke of Orleans, a pension of two thousand francs. His poem of Henry IV. will appear very soon, and it is confidently expected that the work when printed will sustain the reputation which it has acquired from perusals of the manuscript."

Here was something at last which the deceased notary himself would have confessed to be solid, if insufficient. The recipient of the royal bounty was aware of its insufficiency, and was much employed, from this time onward, in improving his

¹ 1 Maynard, 102.

circumstances. The father, indeed, as fathers often do, misinterpreted both his sons; for Armand acquired a very good estate, a share of which his brother inherited, and François, as all the world knows, became the richest man of letters that ever lived. He had discovered at twenty-eight that (to use the language of the late Lord Lytton) "the man who would raise himself to be a power must *begin* by securing a pecuniary independence."

"I am often asked [Voltaire writes in his "Mémoires"] by what art I have come to live like a farmer-general, and it is good to tell it, in order that my example may be of service. I saw so many men of letters poor and despised that I made up my mind a long time ago that I would not increase their number. In France a man must be anvil or hammer; I was born anvil. A slender patrimony becomes smaller every day, because in the long run everything increases in price, and government often taxes both income and money. It is necessary to watch the operations which the ministry, ever in arrears and ever on the change, makes in the finances of the state. There is always some one of these by which a private person can profit without incurring obligation to any one; and nothing is so agreeable as to be the author of your own fortune. The first step costs some pains; the others are easy. You must be economical in your youth, and you find yourself in your old age in possession of a capital that surprises you; and that is the time of life when fortune is most necessary to us."¹

Particulars of the transactions by which he profited so well will meet us from time to time. For a bachelor who lived in other people's châteaux, he was already in tolerable circumstances, and probably never spent, after his father's death, his whole income. He generally had capital at command with which to avail himself of any chance which the exigencies of a ministry or the needs of an individual might throw in his way. He liked to lend money to a lord of good estate upon interest at ten per cent., and had no objection to buying an annuity at a rate favorable to himself, from the apparent fragility of his constitution. The list of his debtors included at length a considerable number of the dukes, princes, and other grand seigneurs, at whose houses he was frequently a guest, and where he seemed to be nothing but the entertaining "little Arouet," a poet of promise, who arranged moonlight *fêtes* for the ladies, and supplied original verses for the same.

¹ 2 Œuvres, 80.

The owners of the world are they who strongly *desire* to own; and this is the only trait common to them all. Voltaire possessed this qualification, and was able to gratify it without a loss of time fatal to his proper pursuits. He usually spent very little money, and always carefully invested his surplus, — a process which, as he remarks, yields surprising results in a long life.

He pushed his fortune at this time in every way open to him. Cardinal Dubois, notorious for his debauchery and profusion, who held benefices and civil posts that yielded him a million and a half of francs per annum, was the regent's first minister and confidant. A bad minister and worse man, he was not as pernicious to France as the austere moral priests who made Louis XIV. expel the Huguenots and loose the Bull Unigenitus. He had some taste in the arts, and was not inclined to make the interests of France quite subordinate to those of the church. Voltaire paid diligent court to him, and offered him his services; having then, as always, a taste for public employment. The cardinal gave him a piece of work to do, the relation of which presents neither of them in an heroic light. It was to unearth (*déterrer* is Voltaire's own word) a French Jew, Levi Salomon by name, who was supposed to be a spy of the emperor, and, perhaps, charged with designs hostile to France. Our tragic poet got upon his track, drew up a "Mémoire" concerning him, giving an account of his past career and present condition, but not unearthing any very valuable information.

"Monseigneur [he writes to the cardinal, May 28, 1722], I send your Eminence a little memorandum of what I have been able to discover touching the Jew of whom I had the honor to speak to you. If your Eminence judges the thing important, shall I presume to suggest that a Jew, being of no country except the one in which he makes money, can as well betray the king to the emperor as the emperor to the king? . . . I can, more easily than any one else in the world, pass into Germany under the pretext of visiting J. B. Rousseau, to whom I wrote two months ago that I wished to show my poem to Prince Eugene and to himself [the poet Rousseau being still in exile, with asylum at the court of Prince Eugene]. I have even received some letters from the prince, in one of which he does me the honor to say that he should be very glad to see me. If these considerations could induce your Eminence to employ me in something, I

entreat you to believe that you would not be dissatisfied with me, and that I should be eternally grateful for being allowed to serve your Eminence."

This was followed by the memorandum referred to, from which we learn that Levi Salomon had been employed by many ministers as a spy; that he had been a spy upon the Duke of Marlborough, and probably had a good many secrets worth knowing. The cardinal appears to have given the poet a roving commission to visit Germany, taking the old French city of Cambrai on the way, of which Cardinal Dubois was archbishop. There was to be a great meeting of diplomatists at Cambrai this year, for the settlement of affairs in Europe which had been left unsettled by the last peace. Voltaire was to attend this important congress, holding apparently *some* commission or license from the cardinal archbishop of Cambrai, either general or special, private or public. Cambrai is a hundred and fifty miles northeast of Paris, near to what is now Belgium, and on the high road to Brussels.

All the continental governments appear then to have placed much dependence upon the spy system, and under Dubois Paris swarmed with spies. In his later works Voltaire mentions the fact with reprobation; as well he might, for he was indebted to the spy Beauregard for his eleven months in the Bastille. That very Beauregard, spy as he was, held a captain's commission in a noted regiment of the royal army, which implied noble lineage; and Voltaire, as we have seen, did not disdain to act as a spy upon a spy. While he was at Versailles this summer, going about among the cabinets preparing for his journey and making interest for his poem, he had a startling insight into the spy system, which led to consequences far more painful than a polite detention at the king's chateau of the Bastille. He was in the rooms of M. Claude Leblanc, the minister of war, one of the most distinguished members of the regent's administration, a statesman of long experience and wide renown, who is remembered to this day for some improvements introduced by him into the military system of France. Who should enter but Captain Beauregard, as if he were a guest invited to dinner! The minister received the spy with more than distinction, — with familiarity. The irascible poet, at this astounding spectacle, lost his self-control, and said, among other things, —

“I was well aware that spies were paid for their services, but I did *not* know that their recompense was to eat at the minister’s own table!”

He withdrew, leaving Beauregard furious, who at once declared his purpose to be avenged. “Then manage it so,” said the minister, “that no one will see anything of it.”¹

Shortly after, as Voltaire was crossing one of the bridges in a sedan chair, Beauregard met him and assaulted him with a cane, inflicting many blows, and leaving a mark upon his face. The assailant immediately after rejoined his regiment in the country. Voltaire entered a complaint in a criminal court, and pursued his criminal with a sustained vivacity all his own, and never rested till he had him in prison. The minister Leblanc, falling into discredit in the nick of time, the spy remained in confinement for several months, and we see Voltaire directing the prosecution against him from remote places, “ruining himself in expense,” until, as we conjecture, Leblanc, returning to favor, was able to rescue his agent so far as to change his prison into exile. The poet speaks of Beauregard as “the man of the handcuffs,” which is probably a figure of speech. The important fact is, that he sought redress from the laws, and sought it with unflinching energy till he obtained it in some degree. Redress is of course impossibl e for an injury so gross, and Voltaire, during his long life of battle with the powers of this world, was never allowed long to forget that he had been beaten by a spy on the bridge of S evres.

Once, as we learn from himself, he was taken for a spy by some soldiers of the regiment of the Prince de Conti. “The prince, their colonel,” he adds, “happened to pass by, and invited me to supper, instead of having me hanged.” If it had been Levi Salomon who had pointed him out to the soldiers as a spy, and had showed them his letter and memorandum to Cardinal Dubois, the Prince de Conti would not the less have invited him to supper, but it is not clear how the accused poet could have explained away the charge to the soldiers.

¹ 2 M emoires de M. Marais, 302.

CHAPTER XVII.

JOURNEY TO HOLLAND.

HE did not set out alone upon this long and interesting journey. One of the grand ladies whom he had met in country châteaux, the Marquise de Rupelmonde, chanced to be going to Holland this summer, and he accepted her invitation to take a seat in her post-chaise. She was the daughter of a marshal of France, an old soldier of the wars of the late king, now governor of Metz. She was also the widow of a Flemish nobleman, who had fallen in battle, after a display of valor that gave his name wide celebrity. Young, rich, agreeable, and thus doubly distinguished, she was appointed, in 1725, one of the *dames de palais* to the coming queen of France. At present she had interests in the Low Countries, and appears to have still kept an establishment at La Hague. Cambrai was on the high-road to Holland, and there our poet may have had something to do for Cardinal Dubois. Brussels could be reached by a slight *détour*, where he desired to meet "our master," Jean-Baptiste Rousseau, as he styled the exiled poet, and to read to him some cantos of the new poem. At the Hague, which had not yet ceased to be a type-foundry and book mart of Europe, he had important business of his own. It was a piece of his usual good luck to find traveling his road a *grande dame* who loved his poetry, relished his conversation, and paid all expenses.

We know one of the chief subjects of conversation between the young widow and the young bachelor, as they traveled northward in the pleasant days of July, 1722. The lady had asked him what she ought to think concerning the vexed subject of religion. It was on this journey that he put the substance of his answer in the form of an Epistle in verse, addressed to her under the name of the "beautiful Uranie." This poem is noted as being the first of his works in which

he gives with any fullness his opinions upon religion. It is simply an elegant and very spirited statement of the deism of that century, the chief position of which was that the prodigies related in the sacred books of all religions are to be taken as legends, not as history. As legends, they possess value and beauty; regarded as history, they become pernicious and infinitely absurd. This Epistle is very much in the style of that "Moïsade" taught him in childhood by the Abbé de Châteauneuf. He dwelt upon the folly of supposing that the Creator of men had "drowned the fathers and died for the children," without having reclaimed the race from wickedness by either method. Upon this theme he enlarged in more than a hundred melodious lines, and, doubtless, added many effective points in conversation on the road. One of his topics was the account given in the Gospels of the life and death of Jesus; and this he treated with a freedom which, in 1722, must have been startling to a lady whose mind, he intimates, was not yet made up: —

"He sprang from a people obscure, imbecile, unstable, insensate lovers of superstition, conquered by their neighbors, crouching in slavery and the eternal contempt of other nations. The Son of God, God himself, makes himself the countryman of this odious people. Born of a Jewess, he creeps under his mother; he suffers under her eyes the infirmities of infancy. Long a low workman, plane in hand, his early days are lost in this base employment."

The narrative is continued in this spirit, and then the poet descants upon the vast absurdity of supposing the American tribes and other remote nations to be consigned to eternal anguish for not being acquainted with these events. He concludes his poem by telling the "uncertain Uranie" what to believe: —

"Believe that the eternal wisdom of the Most High has, with his own hand, engraved at the bottom of thy heart natural religion. Believe that the native candor of thy soul will not be the object of God's eternal hate. Believe that before his throne, in all times and in all places, the heart of the just person is precious. Believe that a modest bonze, a charitable dervish, finds favor in his eyes sooner than a pitiless Jansenist or an ambitious pontiff. . . . God judges us according to our virtues, not our sacrifices."

Doubtless the inexhaustible theme was amply discussed on the way to Cambrai, and probably he found in the lady a pupil willing to learn from his philosophy "to despise the horrors of the tomb and the terrors of another life."

They reached, in due time, the archiepiscopal city of Cambrai, noted then for a magnificent cathedral destroyed in the Revolution, but known to us as having given a word to the English language, — *cambric*, — because the fabric of that name was first made there. The town was full of distinguished company, with nothing to do, awaiting the opening of the congress, and they received Madame de Rupelmonde and her poet with enthusiasm. Parties were given in their honor, and ladies disputed with one another the privilege of entertaining them. At one grand supper, given by the wife of the French ambassador, the cry arose that they must have the pleasure of seeing "*Œdipe*" performed the very next day, in the presence of the author. There was a difficulty: the Spanish ambassador had already ordered "*Les Plaideurs*" of Racine, and no diplomatist was willing to risk offending so weighty a personage. Voltaire undertook the task of inducing the Spaniard to allow the change desired, and produced upon the spot a rhymed petition in "the name of Rupelmonde." The petition being instantly granted, he brought back to the company a reply in rhyme, also of his own composition, in which he informed them that on the next day the actors would play both "*Œdipe*" and its author; that is, "*Œdipe*," and, afterwards, the travesty of the same, as performed in the minor theatres of Paris. It marks the manners of that age that this response, made as if to Madame de Rupelmonde, mentioning her by name, and read to the finest company in Europe, both ladies and gentlemen, should have opened with as palpable a *double entendre* as language could convey.

Even more remarkable was the letter that he wrote from Cambrai to Cardinal Dubois; a *mélange* of prose and verse, of banter and homage, which the cardinal allowed to be handed about in Paris drawing-rooms, as something too good to be kept to himself. On taking leave of the cardinal at Versailles, Voltaire is reported to have said, "I pray you, Monseigneur, not to forget that formerly the Voitures were

protected by the Richelieus." To which the minister is said to have made the rude reply, "It is easier to find Voitures than Richelieus." Nothing abashed, this young dramatist of one success wrote thus to the cardinal prime minister, from Cambrai: —

"A beauty whom they name Rupelmonde, with whom the Loves and I run about the world of late, and who gives law to us all, wishes that on the instant I write you. My muse, as attentive to please her as you, accepts with transport so charming an employ.

"We arrive, Monseigneur, in your metropolis, where, I believe, all the ambassadors and all the cooks of Europe have given one another rendezvous. It seems that all the ministers of Germany are at Cambrai for no other purpose than to drink the health of the emperor. As for the ambassadors of Spain, one of them hears two masses a day, and the other directs the troop of actors. The English ministers send many couriers to Champagne, but few to London. For the rest, no one expects your Eminence here. It is not thought likely that you will leave the Palais Royal to come to visit your flock. You would be too much annoyed, and we also, if you had to leave the ministry for the apostolate.

"May the gentlemen of the congress, in drinking at this retreat, assure the peace of Europe! May you love your city, my lord, and never come to it! I know that you can make homilies, can walk with a cross-bearer, and can mumble litanies. Give, give rather examples to kings; unite always spirit with prudence; let your great deeds be published everywhere; make yourself blessed of France, without giving to Cambrai any benedictions.

"Remember sometimes, Monseigneur, a man who has, in truth, no other regret than not to be able to converse with your Eminence as often as he could desire, and who, of all the favors you can do him, regards the honor of your conversation as the most flattering."

This is the letter which a prince of the church permitted to "run" in Paris in 1722. "How *could* it have got out?" writes Voltaire to his trumpeter, Thieriot; and, three months later, he asks whether Thieriot *still* hears his letter to Cardinal Dubois spoken of, and what is said of it.¹ Part of the joke was that the Archbishop of Cambrai had never seen Cambrai; and he never did see it. The congress, too, during the four years of its continuance, accomplished nothing but numberless *fêtes* and suppers; and it may be that the design of

¹ Lettres Inédites de Voltaire, page 15.

the cardinal in letting the letter escape was to accustom the public to regard it as a brilliant nullity.

After five or six weeks of gayety and glory among the ambassadors and ladies at Cambrai, we find him at Brussels, seventy miles beyond, where he was to meet "our master," Rousseau, and submit an epic poem to his judgment. J. B. Rousseau, then fifty-two years of age, was no longer the satiric and scoffing Rousseau of other days. He had returned to the bosom of the church; he was writing those fine psalms that figure in his later works; he was conspicuously and, as his enemies thought, ostentatiously religious. It is not necessary to suppose him insincere, as French writers usually do. Men who discard religion because they dislike the restraints which it imposes hold their unbelief by a very uncertain tenure, and are liable in the decline of life to relapse into superstition. It was common then to see persons who were thoughtless unbelievers at twenty become thoughtless devotees at fifty. Voltaire, on the contrary, had developed the merry license of his youth into a clear, intelligent, and positive rejection of all the theological dogmas, except that of a Supreme Being.

He was now in a country that swarmed with rosy and jovial priests, and he regarded them with no more reverence than the people of our prairies regard locusts and grasshoppers. The brave old Duchess of Marlborough had been at Aix and Brussels since the peace, and she was good enough to record her impressions of what she saw there. She thought she discovered in Flanders the cause of atheism. It was the priests' owning three quarters of all the land, and still "squeezing" the half-starved people for money. "In one church where I was lately," she wrote, "there were twenty-seven jolly-face priests that had nothing in the world to do but to say mass for the living and take the dead souls the sooner out of purgatory by their prayers."¹ Voltaire had an opportunity ere-

¹ The duchess writes from Flanders, 1712: "Since I have Room I can't end without giving you some Account how I pass my Time in this Place, which is in visiting Nunnerys and Churches, where I have heard of such Marvell's and seen such ridiculous Things as would appear to you incredible if I should set about to describe them, tis so much beyond all that I ever saw or heard of in England of that Religion which I am apt to think has made those Atheists that are in the World, for tis impossible to see the Abuses of the Priests without raising strange

long of talking over these matters with the duchess, and, we may be sure, agreed with her. Indeed, on the first day of his arrival at Brussels, he behaved so irreverently at mass that the people were on the point of turning him out of the church. So Rousseau records, and the culprit himself admits that his behavior was a little disorderly.

The two poets met, neither being aware of the change that had taken place in the other. At first all was cordiality between them, and they were inseparable. Voltaire, as I think, knew Rousseau's innocence of the charge that had exiled him, and must have been sensible to the charm of his verse. He called him by no other name than Master; and, besides reading him portions of "La Henriade," he intrusted the precious manuscript to his keeping for several days. Rousseau praised the poem, only objecting to a few passages wherein the Pope and the priests were not treated quite in the manner of a good Catholic, — passages which the author himself was striving to tone down to the pitch demanded by the official censor. All was well between them until one fatal day, when the two poets, in the presence of Madame de Rupelmonde, read to one another some of their recent minor poems; Rousseau, his "Jugement de Pluton," which ought to have been excellent, for no man has ever employed the Greek legends more happily than he. But the poet had a grievance of ten years' standing, — his exile, — and this grievance was the real subject of the poem. Who can treat with effective grace and dignity an ancient, rankling grievance of his own? Voltaire, being asked his opinion of the satire, answered truly, "It is not in the style

Thoughts in one's Mind, which one checks as soon as one can, and I think tis unnatural for any Body to have so monstrous a Notion as that there is no God, if the Priests (to get all the Power and Mony themselves) did not act in the Manner that they doe in these Parts, where they have three Parts or four of all the Land in the Country, and yet they are not contented, but squeeze the poor deluded People to get more, who are really half-starved by the vast number of Holydays in which they can't work, and the Mony they must pay when they have it for the Forgiveness of their Sins. I believe tis from the Charm of Power and Mony that has made many of our Clergymen act as they have don; but my Comfort is, tho a very small one, that if by their Assistance all are quit undon they will not bee the better for it, there is such a vast Number of Priests that must take Place of them, for in one Church where I was lately there were 27 jolly-face Priests that had Nothing in the World to doe but to say Mass for the living and to take the dead Souls the sooner out of Purgatory by their Prayers." (Letters from Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough. London, 1875.)

of our master, the good and great Rousseau." The elder poet, of course, was doubly enamored of this production, and did not conceal his chagrin. He read on the same occasion another poem on the same unfortunate subject, — his own wrongs and the sublime manner in which he had borne them. It was entitled, "To Posterity." The single step between the sublime and the ridiculous was taken by Rousseau in this vainglorious ode, and it drew from Voltaire the well-known comment, "That is an ode, master, which, in my opinion, will never reach its address." He was mistaken, it is true, for the ode is printed every year or two in new editions of Rousseau's poems; but such witticisms sting and are not forgotten.

"Take your revenge!" cried Voltaire. "Here is a little poem which I submit to the judgment of the father of Numa." It was the "Epistle to La Belle Uranie" mentioned above. Rousseau listened to the reading of the audacious work as far as the passage where Jesus Christ is introduced as exercising the low (*lâche*) trade of carpenter. Rousseau broke in upon the reading at this point, saying, "Spare yourself, sir, the trouble of reading more; it is a horrible impiety!" Voltaire replaced his poem in the portfolio, and is reported to have said, "Let us go to the theatre. I am sorry the author of the 'Moïsade' did not notify the public that he had turned devotee." Something resembling this he may have said. They went to the theatre, but not with happy effect upon their minds, and the estrangement thus begun was aggravated into hostility, which time only embittered.

At Brussels, where, as at Cambrai, he seemed to be immersed in pleasure, he did not lose sight of the main object, the publication of his poem; and he sent to Thieriot designs for nine engravings, one for each canto, to be executed at Paris.

Early in October he was at the Hague, the scene of his early love and folly. At Brussels he had his letters addressed to the French ambassador's; at the Hague he lived at the hotel of Madame de Rupelmonde. His business in the Dutch capital was to make arrangements for getting his poem printed and published there simultaneously with the Paris edition, for which he confidently hoped to get the "privilege." In case the censors should refuse the privilege

for France, the Holland edition might perhaps serve for both countries. He found a willing publisher, and we see him busy enough preparing to print, and still softening the passages in which a Paris censor might find heresy, political or theological. He was much matured since his last visit, and he had time now to observe and consider the wondrous spectacle that greeted him on every side in a city where the human mind was not in suppression. In glorious Holland valiant men had conquered a part of their heritage of freedom, and had reduced the priest to something like safe dimensions. In those beautiful days of October he found the country a paradise of meadows, canals, and foliage; Amsterdam the storehouse of the world, with a thousand vessels in port, and half a million people, among whom he discovered not one idler, not one pauper, not one dandy, not one insolent. He met the prime minister on foot in Amsterdam, without lackeys, in the midst of the people. In the absence of personal government, no one in Holland had any court to make, and people did not "put themselves in hedge" to see a prince go by. At the Hague, the crowd of ambassadors made more magnificence and more society. "I pass my life there," he writes, "between labor and pleasure, and thus live Holland fashion and French fashion. We have here a detestable opera, but, by way of compensation, I see Calvinist ministers, Arminians, Socinians, Rabbis, Anabaptists, who discourse to admiration, and who, in truth, are all in the right."

He passed the time very agreeably in Holland, floating on the canal between Amsterdam and the Hague, riding daily on horseback, playing at tennis, drinking tokay, composing circulars and proposals, dining out, and declaiming portions of his poem to admiring circles. As the fine season drew to an end, he was obliged to turn his thoughts toward Paris, where Thieriot was getting subscriptions to "La Henriade," and making interest in its behalf in all possible ways. No *grande dame* or ambassador happening to be going to Paris, with a seat to spare in a vehicle, he was to perform the journey, as he remarked, on his own ill-covered bones (*mes maigres fesses*); that is, on horseback, taking his own saddle, and getting a fresh horse at each post-house. "Pray

to God," he writes to his comrade, "that I may have good horses on the journey." He asks him, also, to buy an excellent horse for him at Paris for two hundred or two hundred and fifty francs. "You have only to charge with this commission," he adds, "the same people who sold my horses." The cost of this mode of traveling was moderate, but the thrifty poet probably got home for nothing, even if he did not profit a little by the journey. He writes to Thieriot to send him the *exact* price paid in France for an escalin, a florin, a pantagon, a ducat, and a Spanish-pistole, coins current in Holland, and perhaps a little cheaper there than in France. The exchange upon a bagful of pistoles and ducats might well pay for the cost of traveling with his own saddle on hired horses.¹ On the last day of October, 1722, he was as far on his return as Cambrai, where he distributed circulars announcing his poem as about to appear, and inviting subscriptions.

Never was an enterprise more vigorously "pushed" than this one of publishing an epic poem upon Henry of Navarre. While Thieriot at Paris was receiving subscriptions, and endeavoring to remove the scruples of the censor, the author of the work was riding from post to post, from château to château, all the way from Holland, down through Brabant, skirting Germany, and so working his way by the end of the year to the city of Orleans, a hundred miles south of Paris, exciting everywhere an interest in the forthcoming work. Near Orleans was the abode of Lord Bolingbroke, La Source, a bewitching estate, bought with money gained by speculation in the schemes of John Law, and brought to high perfection by English taste and liberality. The exiled statesman was living there with his French wife, the Marquise de Villette,—himself a Frenchman in his literary tastes, as well as in his easy morals. Voltaire was his guest at La Source in the early days of the year 1723, and the poet wrote a letter there to Thieriot, which was perhaps meant to be handed about in Paris. At least, we know it *was* handed about, and with effect. He assured Thieriot that, in the illustrious Englishman he found all the learning of his own country and all the politeness of theirs, a master of the

¹ Voltaire à Ferney, page 304.

French language, and a discriminating appreciator of the excellent literature of all lands.

“After such a portraiture of Lord Bolingbroke, it is hardly becoming in me to say that madame and himself have been infinitely satisfied with my poem. In the enthusiasm of their approbation, they place it above all the poetical works which have appeared in France, but I know how much I ought to abate of such extravagant eulogium. I am going to pass three months in meriting a part of it. It seems to me that, by dint of correcting, the work is taking at length a suitable form.”

“The diarizing Mathieu Marais, advocate to the parliament of Paris, no friend to notaries’ sons who visited lordly châteaux, read this letter, and was almost persuaded by it to think better of “the little Arouet” for a moment.

“He has been charmed [wrote the advocate in his journal] with the mind of that Englishman, and has written to Paris a marvelous letter about him. So highly did milord praise his poem, which he read to him, that they are printing it in Holland by subscription, with beautiful illustrations. If it is as fine as that of Racine [son of the great dramatist, and author of “La Grace,” a religious poem in four cantos, published in 1720], we shall have two great poets who are petty men: for this Racine, whom I have seen two or three times, has but a frivolous mind, and is without tact in conversation; and the other is a fool, who despises the Sophocles and the Corneilles, who has thought to be a man of the court, who has got himself caned, and who will never know anything because he thinks he knows everything.”¹

An amusing specimen of contemporary judgment. The Duke of St. Simon alludes to Voltaire in the same lofty manner, as a person who had gained “a kind of standing in the world” through his follies and the general decline of morals and manners.

We must own that these puffs preliminary and the general system of “pushing” carried on for some years by Voltaire and Thieriot do not present a poet in a romantic light. We are accustomed, in these happier days, to think of our poets as living in pleasant suburban places, in houses of their own, picturesque or venerable, maturing their works in peaceful seclusion, and having them spread abroad over the earth without

¹ 2 Journal of Mathieu Marais, page 377.

any interference on the part of the author. It was far otherwise in the France of 1722, when Voltaire submitted his poem to the censure. The system of publishing, as we find it now, did not exist; nor did the laws exist by which an author holds property in the products of his own mind. The measures taken by Voltaire to create an interest in his work before its publication were all necessary in a country governed by caprice. Such expedients were as necessary in 1722 as they were in 1789, when Beaumarchais, by similar arts and equal persistence, forced his "Figaro" upon the Paris stage against the king himself.

The literary sensation of this very year, 1722, well illustrates the precarious tenure by which literary men then held their subsistence. A stroke of a minister's pen suspended the labors of Le Sage, the author of "Gil Blas," as well as of the whole coterie of authors and composers who sustained the comic opera. The comic opera had become too popular. It was drawing away the fashionable world of Paris from the Théâtre Français, in which the works of the classic dramatists were performed, and the actors had interest enough to procure an order designed to suppress the comic opera, and to reduce the minor theatres to their former *répertoire* of songs, music, recitations, Punch, and the ballet. Instead of expressing this intention in plain language, the order set forth that on the minor stage there should be *only one speaking character at a time*. Le Sage and his colleagues, refusing to work under this hard condition, resorted in despair to a certain Alexis Piron, an untried hanger-on of the theatre, the only man in Europe, perhaps, capable of producing an effective three-act comedy, and keep within the iron limits of the new decree. The order of 1722 brought the manager of the comic opera a suppliant to his garret, and in forty-eight hours Alexis produced a play which filled the void. Nothing gave the Parisians of that generation keener delight than to see an arbitrary decree like this at once obeyed and evaded. But, in truth, the comedy which the merry Alexis produced on this occasion would have amused even a hostile audience, so full was it of those broad, strong comic effects which audiences cannot resist. He had but one speaker on the stage at a time, but he enabled an anxious manager to exhibit every night, to the utmost advantage, his

whole company of actors, singers, dancers, and gymnasts. "Harlequin-Deucalion" was the name of the play. It opens while the storm is still raging which has drowned all the world except Deucalion, who has saved himself by getting astride of a barrel. In the midst of the tempest, this sole survivor of the human family comes bounding upon the stage, barrel and all, with a huge knapsack on his back. The first scene consists of a long soliloquy, in which he makes several humorous local allusions, and spouts passages parodied from plays that were running at the time, and were perfectly familiar to the audience. Every sentence in this soliloquy was a distinct hit, and would make a French audience laugh. As he sits down to dinner, talking to himself, he notices that his language has a sort of mad propensity to rhyme, which puzzles him, and causes him to look around to see where he is. He discovers that he and his barrel have landed upon Mount Parnassus, which accounts for his poetizing. The reader, who knows what a curious creature an audience is, can easily imagine what boisterous fun this rhyming trick would create, particularly when it manifested itself in burlesque parodies of plays as well known to Frenchmen then as Hamlet is to us now.

And so the play goes on, until every folly of the day is hit, and every member of the company appears. The failure of Voltaire's play "Artemire" does not escape. In the second act, Deucalion appears mounted upon Pegasus. He spurs and lashes the noble animal until he has roused *himself* to a high pitch of exaltation, when he declaims those opening verses of Voltaire's play that promised such great things: —

"Oui, tous ces conquérants rassemblés sur ce bord,
Soldats sous Alexandre, et rois après sa mort."

Having delivered these famous lines in a tragedian's most swelling manner, he falls headlong from Pegasus upon his back, and gets up dolefully rubbing himself, and saying, as if he had lost the word, "*Après sa mort, après sa mort*; I am gone all lame. By Jove, it is a pity; I was getting on so well."

The play was a prodigious success, and the government tacitly permitted so audacious and brilliant a defiance of its decree. Voltaire was present at one of the performances of the piece, and he may have learned from it how safe it was to evade

the strong measures of a government that was itself not strong. According to the jolly Alexis, the author of "Artemire" was not displeased at the allusions to himself in "Deucalion," saying to the author at the close, "I felicitate myself, sir, upon having had a part in your success;" whereupon Piron protested he did not know whose the lines were that he had caused to be spouted from the back of Pegasus.

To this day, French people love to relate encounters of wit between Voltaire and Piron. Piron himself records many of them, in which the author of "Harlequin-Deucalion" invariably comes off victorious. "*Eo rus*," wrote Voltaire, one day, to notify Piron that he was "going into the country." Piron, to surpass this epistle in brevity, replied by one letter, "*I*," which is Latin for "Go." But then this anecdote is related of other men. For fifty years, Piron and Voltaire, known generators of anecdotes, were accustomed to have spurious offspring laid at their doors.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"LA HENRIADE" PUBLISHED.

IT is May, 1723. Voltaire and his friend Thieriot are established at Paris, in the town-house of the Marquis de Bernières, a distinguished magistrate of Rouen (*président à mortier*), whose wife had long been one of Voltaire's most familiar correspondents. M. de Bernières was good enough to let part of his house to the author of "Œdipe" at six hundred francs per annum, and to permit him to pay a further sum of about twelve hundred francs per annum for other expenses of Thieriot and himself when they were in Paris, — an arrangement creditable to the good sense of both parties. The compact was drawn in proper form by a notary, — Armand Arouet, *mon frère*, — who also gave legal receipts for the rent, and seems always at this period to have had money of François's in his hands. During Voltaire's long absences from Paris, he occasionally sends Thieriot to *mon frère* for money, and often urges him not to forget to "dine a little" now and then with his sister.

The house of M. de Bernières was situated on that part of the bank of the Seine which was then called Quai des Théatins, now Quai Voltaire, and it was nearly opposite the gardens of the Tuileries. It ought to have been an agreeable site; but Voltaire complains of "this noisy *quai*," and explains the cause of the noise. Paris in 1723 was very far from being either the elegant or the commodious city which it is now. Servants and others came down in great numbers to the river to draw water, and one of the places convenient for the purpose was this Quai des Théatins, under the windows of a laborious and susceptible author, correcting an epic and composing a new play. He writes to Madame de Bernières, who was about to return from Rouen to Paris, telling her that her rooms were making ready, and urging her to come sooner than she had intended.

"At least [he adds], grant me another favor, which I solicit with the utmost urgency. I find myself, I know not how, burdened with three servants, whom I cannot afford to keep, and have not the resolution to discharge. One of these three *messieurs* is poor La Brie, whom you saw long ago in my service. He is too old to be a lackey, incapable of being a valet, and just the man for a door-keeper. You have a Swiss who is not in your service to please *you*, but to sell at your door bad wine to all the water-carriers, who come here every day and make your house a nasty wine-shop. If the desire of having at your door an animal with a shoulder-knot, whom you pay dearly every year to serve you ill three months and sell bad wine twelve; if, I say, the desire of having your door decorated with such an ornament is not very near your heart, I ask it of you as a favor to give the place to my poor La Brie. You will oblige me sensibly. I have almost as strong a wish to see him at your door as to see you arrive at your house. The place will be the making of him; he will cost you much less than a Swiss, and will serve you much better. If, besides that, the pleasure of obliging me counts for something in the arrangements of your house, I flatter myself that you will not refuse me this favor, which I ask with importunity. I await your answer to reform my little establishment."

A moving epistle, but it did not suffice. Next year there was a robbery in the house, and the poet wrote to his comrade, "This comes of having an imbecile and interested Swiss at your door, keeping a wine-shop, instead of an attached *portier*." Poor La Brie remained upon his hands, and he was obliged to reform his household otherwise. Behold him, then, settled in his new quarters with his factotum Thieriot. "La Henriade" was substantially finished, including notes, remarks, pictures, an outline of the history of Henry IV., and a dedication to the king, then a rude, robust boy of thirteen, delighting in the slaughter of small birds. Subscription papers had been accessible to the public for some months, with results far from flattering. "You have undertaken a work," said M. de Malezien to the author, one day, "which is not suited to our nation. The French have not the epic head. Though you should write as well as Racine and Boileau, it will be much if they read you."¹ The comparative failure of the subscriptions was broadly burlesqued at the theatre which had been the recent scene of Piron's triumph, and the poet did not rel-

¹ Essai sur la Poésie Épique par Voltaire, 13 Œuvres, 542.

ish the jest, for he was not in the best humor. Beauregard was still in jail, and a cause of expense to him; he was kept out of his share of his father's estate; the subscriptions were not as productive of cash as he had hoped; expense followed upon expense, with dim prospect of reimbursement. Worst of all, it now began to be agonizingly doubtful whether the poem would be allowed to appear in France, and he dared not use the proceeds of the subscriptions, for fear of having to return them. Once he ventured to take two hundred francs from that "sacred fund," but made haste to restore it. We cannot wonder, then, to find him writing to Thieriot this year that the burlesque at the theatre had *not* sharpened the bitterness of his cup, and that he willingly *forgave* those scoundrels of authors the buffooneries which were their trade.

How could he, at the age of twenty-nine, have been so little acquainted with the court as to expect the "privilege" of publishing in France such a work as "La Henriade"? He did expect it most confidently. He had softened or removed, as he supposed, every passage that the most limited priest or the most arrogant prelate could seize upon as objectionable. He had read large portions of it to the regent, and had changed certain passages with a particular view to conciliate Cardinal Dubois. But, heavens! there was a tone in the very dedication to the king which must have startled the censor of a government like this, which, at the best, could only hand the reins of power from a dissolute Dubois to a virtuous Fleury, both priests and both cardinals, — a government destined for the next sixty-six years to invest with the attraction of forbidden fruit every bright and free utterance of the human mind.

"SIRE: Every work in which the great deeds of Henry IV. are spoken of ought to be offered to your majesty. It is the blood of that hero which flows in your veins. You are king only because he was a great man; and France, that wishes you as much virtue as he possessed, and more happiness, flatters itself that the life and the throne which you owe to him will engage you to imitate him.

"Fortunate in having known adversity, he felt for the miseries of men, and softened the rigors of a rule from which he had suffered himself. Other kings have courtiers; he had friends. His heart was full of tenderness for his true servants.

"That king, who truly loved his subjects, never regarded their complaints as sedition, nor the remonstrances of magistrates as encroachment upon the sovereign authority. Shall I say it, sire? Yes; truth commands me so to do. It is a thing very shameful to kings, this astonishment we experience when they sincerely love the happiness of their people. May you one day accustom us to regard that virtue as something appertaining to your crown! It was the true love of Henry IV. for France which made him adored by his subjects."

There is something in this dedication that savors of the free air of Holland which the author had lately inhaled. It was the utterance of a citizen, not of a courtier, and it did not conciliate. The poem itself related the bloodiest triumph of intolerance Europe has known, — the massacres of St. Bartholomew, one hundred and fifty years before. The natural effect of the poem upon every intelligent mind was to excite a horror of intolerant religion, as the one baleful and hideous thing of modern history, attesting its hellish character in every age by fire and massacre; the direct cause of the worst things man has ever done against man. The poem exhibited brave and humane men turned into monsters by intolerant religion; "invoking the Lord while slaughtering their brothers, and, their arms wet with the blood of innocent children, daring to offer to God that execrable incense." It showed French rivers flowing red with French blood, and bearing to the sea the bodies of Frenchmen slain by Frenchmen, set on to the fell work by crafty priests. It showed Elizabeth, queen of the "proud, indomitable English," saying to Henry of Navarre, "A great man ought not to dread the futile thunders of Rome," — a power "inflexible to the conquered, complaisant to conquerors, ready, as interest dictates, either to absolve or condemn." It gave in harmonious and powerful verse a catalogue of the unspeakable things done by fanatics in every age: mothers offering to Moloch the smoking entrails of their own children; Iphigenia led by her father a sacrifice to the altar; the early Christians hurled from the summit of the capitol; Jews burned every year (twenty were burned in 1717 by Portuguese) for "not abandoning the faith of their forefathers." It showed religion used by ambitious chiefs as a pretext, but accepted by ignorant followers as the most real

of all possible causes of hostility. "To him who avenges the church all becomes legitimate: murder is just; it is authorized; nay, it is commanded by Heaven!" The poem dwells upon the doctors of divinity whose fierce and bloody lessons drive weak men mad, and make them the assassins of good kings; and upon "those priests whose fatal eloquence kindled the fires that had consumed France."

Apart from such passages as these, the spirit of the poem was secular, and its *morale* was that of the deism then in vogue, a system that had no room in it for priests. The very passages inserted to conciliate the censorship had offense in them; for if the author spoke of the Protestant doctrines as "error," he must needs add that "error, too, had its heroes." Enough; after some weeks of suspense the poet learned that the "privilege" would not be granted; and, consequently, all the arrangements hitherto made, in Holland and in France, were of no effect. He could not supply copies to his subscribers, nor "copy" to his Dutch printer; for it seems that his bargain with the publisher at the Hague was conditional upon his obtaining the privilege in France.

A French commentator upon these events judiciously remarks that Voltaire did not write a poem in nine or ten cantos for the purpose of keeping it in a portfolio. He resolved to print his poem and supply copies in Paris without a "privilege." As Alexis Piron had evaded with impunity a positive prohibition, so he, with the help of Thieriot, now set about eluding a negative one. Sixty-eight miles from Paris, on the banks of the river Seine, is the city of Rouen, the chief abode of his landlord, M. de Bernières, where also lived M. de Cideville, another magistrate, a fellow-student at the Collège Louis-le-Grand, and ever since a faithful friend. There was much going to and fro this year between the Quai des Théatins at Paris and a certain printing-house at Rouen. Voltaire was at Rouen for a while; then Thieriot; then Voltaire again; then both. Such was the slowness of the old printers that it required five months to put the two hundred and thirty pages of the first edition in type; and, meanwhile, Thieriot in Paris was getting two thousand bindings ready against the arrival of the printed sheets. All was done with the utmost secrecy. The poem was spoken of in Voltaire's letters as *mon fils*, *mon*

bâtard, mon petit bâtard, and the bindings as "my two thousand jackets." Doubtless, Madame de Bernières, as well as M. de Cideville, assisted in the scheme; for it was at her house that Voltaire and Thieriot lived while they remained near Rouen. The dates are all in confusion here; but, happily, it is of no great consequence. We can discover, by long groping in the dim cross-lights, that, during a great part of 1723, this business of getting two thousand copies of "La Henriade" manufactured was a grand object with our impetuous and irresistible poet.

It was a business that left him many vacant hours, part of which he employed in writing a new tragedy, "Marianne." The scene of this drama was laid in Palestine. Herod, the king, was the chief personage; and his young wife, Mariamne, was the innocent, suspected heroine. He toiled at this play with even more than his usual assiduity, in the hope of obliterating by it the memory of his dramatic failure in *Artemire*, some passages and incidents of which he employed in the new tragedy. In November he was to have an opportunity of hearing it read by Madame Lecouvreur, the first actress of her generation, before a company of great note and splendor at the Château de Maisons, in the forest of St. Germain, nine miles from Paris.

At this château he had been a frequent guest for considerable periods. The rooms in which he lived and wrote used to be shown to visitors long after his death. The remains of the château, one of the first built by Mansard, and occupied by a number of famous persons, show how capable it must have been of entertaining fine company in the early years of Louis XV. M. de Maisons, the young lord of the mansion, was accustomed to bring together those who practiced and those who enjoyed the arts; or, as the chronicles of the period have it, "all the arts, all the talents, and all the agreeablenesses." Voltaire was doubly welcome, as poet and as friend of Madame de Villars, who was a near relation of Madame de Maisons.

A grand three-days *fête* was announced for the early days of November, 1723, at the Château de Maisons, to which sixty lords and ladies were invited. The Abbé de Fleury, preceptor and favorite of the king, who was soon to be ear-

dinal and minister, was expected. Plays were to be performed and concerts given; all the usual round of diversions and divertisements were to be presented; and, as a special entertainment, there was to be a formal reading of the new tragedy by Madame Lecouvreur, in the presence of the author. The 4th of the month had arrived. Madame Lecouvreur, the first lady of her profession, it is said, who ever associated on apparently equal terms with her sister artists, the grand ladies of the old *régime*, had reached the château. Voltaire arrived, and preparations for the festival were going forward. On that very day, November 4th, the lord of the castle and himself were indisposed. According to the usage of the time, they had themselves bled; which relieved the host, but not the guest.

After two days of fever, a slight eruption revealed, late at night, the dread malady of that century, the small-pox! The consternation was such that guests, roused from sleep, set off in the middle of the night for their homes. Couriers were dispatched to the Abbé de Fleury and other invited persons, warning them not to come. Madame Lecouvreur, with the proverbial kindness of her profession, sent an express to Rouen to call Thieriot from the printing of the poem to the bedside of the poet. M. de Maisons summoned Gervasi, the physician of Paris most noted for his successful treatment of this disease. We possess, from the pen of Voltaire, a curiously minute account of the treatment to which he was subjected on this occasion, as well as of the system in vogue, written in January, 1724, at the request of the aged Baron de Breteuil, father of that Marquise du Châtelet, with whom he was to be so intimately and so long connected. This epistle, one of the longest he ever wrote, is a valuable chapter for the historian of the healing art, though much too extensive for insertion here.

“The malady [wrote Voltaire] appeared after two days of fever, and revealed itself by a slight eruption. I had myself bled a second time, on my own responsibility, despite the popular prejudice. M. de Maisons had the goodness to send me the next day M. de Gervasi, physician to the Cardinal de Rohan, who visited me with reluctance. He feared to be engaged in treating uselessly, in a delicate and feeble constitution, the small-pox already at the second day

of the eruption, and the development of which had been hindered only by two insufficient bleedings, without any medicine.

"He came, nevertheless, and found me with a malignant fever. From the first, he had a bad opinion of my case; the servants who attended me perceived it, and did not permit me to remain in ignorance of it. They announced to me, at the same time, that the priest of the parish, who took an interest in my health, and who was not afraid of the small-pox, had inquired if he could see me without giving me inconvenience. I admitted him at once; I confessed; and I made my will, which, as you may well believe, was not very long. After that, I awaited death with sufficient tranquillity; regretting, however, to go without having put the last hand to my poem and to 'Mariamne,' and sorry to leave my friends so soon. Nevertheless, M. de Gervasi did not abandon me for a moment. He studied with attention all the movements of nature; he gave me nothing to take without telling me the reason of it; he let me partly see the danger, and showed me clearly the remedy. His reasonings carried conviction and confidence to my mind,—a method very necessary with a sick person, because the hope of cure is itself half a cure. Eight times he was obliged to make me take an emetic; and, instead of the cordials usually given in this disease, he made me drink two hundred pints of lemonade. This treatment, which will seem to you extraordinary, was the only one that could have saved my life, every other road conducting me to certain death; and I am persuaded that most of those who have died of this dreadful malady would be still alive if they had been treated as I was.

"Popular prejudice abhors, in cases of small-pox, bleeding and medicine. People wish nothing but cordials given; wine is administered to the sick man, and even broth. Error triumphs, from the fact that many persons recover under this regimen. People do not consider that the only cases of small-pox successfully treated in this manner are those which no fatal accident accompanies, and which are in no degree dangerous."

He continues to defend the bridge which had carried him over, and to pour forth expressions of gratitude to M. and Madame de Maisons, as well as to his devoted Thierot, who flew to him, post haste, as soon as he received Madame Lecouvreur's message, and remained with him till he recovered. On the eleventh day from his seizure he was out of danger; on the twelfth he wrote verses; on the twenty-sixth he was well enough to be removed to Paris, and thus relieve his generous friends from a presence which had cost them and their circle

so much inconvenience. His carriage had scarcely gone two hundred paces from the château when the floor of the room which he had occupied burst into flames from a charred beam under the fire-place; and before the fire was subdued damage was done to the extent of one hundred thousand francs. The château itself, one of the finest in Europe, was only saved by the help of engines brought from Paris.

The invalid did not hear of this calamity until the next morning. "I had the same grief," he wrote to the Baron, "as if I had been the guilty cause of it: the fever seized me again, and I assure you that at that moment I was not grateful to M. Gervasi for having saved my life." M. and Madame de Maisons, anticipating his feelings, wrote consoling letters to him, as if they had burned a château of his instead of his having occasioned damage to one of theirs.

Many months passed before he recovered his health; and, indeed, from this time to the end of his life, he was more liable than before to those indispositions and that feeling of bodily insufficiency to which literary men are liable.

A great joy was in store for him at the beginning of the new year, 1724, one of the keenest known to mortals. After a year of intrigue and suspense, after nine years of fitful, impassioned toil, copies of his poem were in existence! It only remained to get them from Rouen to Paris, — a difficult task under paternal government. Madame de Bernières, who had wagons and barges frequently going between the two cities, gave the conspirators her assistance; and so, at last, as if "by miracle," the great packages were got past the barriers, and safely housed somewhere in Paris. The public curiosity, the author's tact, Thieriot's zeal, and the coöperation of the elect did the rest; and early in the year 1724 copies began to circulate. The poem becoming a topic of conversation, it was a distinction to have seen a copy; then a merit to have read the work; until, at length, nobody's secret drawer was complete without it. Its success with the "reading public" of the day was immediate, immense, and universal; that is, it reached at once and strongly moved the few hundred persons, here and there in Europe, who shared the intellectual life of their generation. The very defects and faults of the work, which exclude it from the rank of the three or four immortal

epics, enhanced its effect upon French readers of that day. Hear the verdict of Mathieu Marais, old lawyer, a man prejudiced against this high-aspiring son of a notary. Marais did but give utterance to the general feeling when he wrote in his diary for February, 1724, the well known entry: —

"The poem of 'The League,' [so it was called in the first edition] by Arouet, of which so much has been said, is selling secretly. I have read it. It is a wonderful work, a masterpiece of the mind, as beautiful as Virgil; and behold our language in possession of an epic poem, as of other poetical works! I know not how to speak of it. There is everything in the poem. I cannot think where Arouet, so young, could have learned so much. It is like inspiration. What an abyss is the human mind! The surprising thing is that every part of the poem is temperate, well ordered, urbane; we find in it no crude vivacity, no merely brilliant passages, but everywhere elegance, correctness, happy turns, an eloquence simple and grand, — qualities belonging to mature genius, and nowise characteristic of the young man. Fly, La Motte, Fontenelle, and all of you, poets of the new style! From this marvelous poem, at once the glory and the shame of our nation, learn to think and to write!"¹

From such contemporary notices as these it is evident that the similarity in form of "La Henriade" to the "Æneid," which sometimes makes the modern reader smile and the irreverent school-boy laugh, was part of its charm and an element of its power in 1724. These two poems frequently fill a corner of the same school-desk, and usually we come to the study of the French epic when we are somewhat familiar with the Latin one. The resemblances, merely external, but needlessly obvious, and very numerous, strike the unformed mind most forcibly, and are fatal to the effect of "La Henriade," as a whole, upon mature readers. Voltaire's second book, for example, is as different as possible in spirit from Virgil's second book, but in form it resembles it. In Virgil, Æneas recounts to Queen Dido the fall of Troy; in Voltaire, Henry of Navarre relates to Queen Elizabeth of England the civil wars of France. Voltaire himself assures us that he purposely modeled his sixth canto upon Virgil's sixth. The large ingredient of the supernatural in the "Æneid" we accept as readily as we do the ghost in "Hamlet;" but it re-

¹ 3 Mémoires de M. Marais, 89.

pels in "La Henriade." We do not so much enjoy the long interview between the English queen and the French prince when we know that Henry of Navarre never crossed the Channel, nor looked upon Elizabeth's face. To the French reader of 1724 devices of that nature seemed legitimate, and, such was the ignorance of educated Frenchmen then of their own history, that most readers could accept the narrative as substantially true. "In my childhood," says Voltaire, "no one knew anything of Henry IV." Most readers of that generation brought to the perusal of this poem minds less acquainted with the great contest between Protestants and Catholics in France than with the condemnation of Socrates or the wars of Cæsar and Pompey.

The best office that literature renders a nation is to keep it vividly acquainted with its history, and to give that history its true interpretation. In publishing this poem, Voltaire did not add to the treasures of the human mind one more immortal epic; but he began the arduous work, not yet complete, of making France understand how it was that in the sixteenth century, when the nations came, one after another, to the parting of the ways, and had to choose between the upward and the downward road, France was prevented from making the right choice. There was more heat than light in the poem. The author of it had more heat than light. He felt, as few have ever felt, the evils that come to men from intolerant religion; but he could not, at that early day, regard intolerant religion merely as a mark of imperfect development: its cause, the ignorance and timidity of man; its cure, increase of knowledge and safer abundance.

The poem continued to make its way over Europe, receiving in due time all the honors: translation, imitation, suppression, papal anathema, piracy, parody, burlesque, general approval, and universal currency. A French bibliographer computes the sale in the first hundred and twenty-five years of its existence at 335,000 copies, in seven languages, — French, Italian, Latin, German, Russian, Dutch, and English.¹ "All the world is making epic poems," wrote Voltaire in 1725; "I have brought poems into fashion." Marais has a similar entry in his diary: "The poets write nothing but epics," — "Clovis,"

¹ *Bibliographie Voltairienne*, par J. M. Quérard, page 23.

in eight cantos, one of them. The career of the robber Car-touche, lately executed, was the subject of one parody. A poem called "La Demoniade," or magic unmasked, was another. A pirate printer published an edition in Holland, and got many copies into Paris. The police, when everybody had read the poem, and most collectors possessed it, hunted it down with such exemplary vigilance that it became at length as Marais records, *really* difficult to buy a copy, and finally, for a short time, impossible.

In the midst of his first elation, just as friends and subscribers were receiving their copies, and every hour brought to the author some new reminder of his glory, the new tragedy "Marianne" was performed at the Théâtre Français for the first time. Monday, March 6, 1724, was the date. The theatre was crowded almost beyond precedent, the money taken amounting to five thousand five hundred and thirty francs. The part of the Queen of Palestine, the ill-starred Marianne, was played by Madame Lecouvreur, the queen of the tragic stage. The author was present, with a crowd of his friends and admirers, many of whom had shed tears on hearing the play read. All went well until the middle of the third act, when King Herod enters for the first time upon the scene. It is a risk to hold so long in reserve a chief character, whose entrance may not fulfill the expectation created. Molière ventures this in *Tartuffe*, and with success, for *Tartuffe* fills and holds the stage at every instant when he is visible. It was otherwise with a King Herod, who was as odious as *Tartuffe*, but not as interesting. "I perceived," says Voltaire, "the moment Herod appeared, that it was impossible the piece should succeed." The audience bore it, however, very good-naturedly, it seems, until near the close of the play, when the hapless queen lifts the cup of poison to her lips. A wag in the pit broke the silence of the moment by crying out, "THE QUEEN DRINKS!"

This was an allusion to the revels of *Twelfth Night*, familiar then to every auditor, at which a king and queen were chosen by lot; and whenever one of them lifted a flagon to drink this cry was raised, and a prodigious uproar ensued, in burlesque imitation of that ancient usage which Hamlet thought more honored in the breach than the observance:

“The king doth wake to-night, . . . and, as he drains his draughts of Rhenish down, the kettle-drum and trumpet thus bray out the triumph of his pledge.” “*La reine boit,*” said the voice in the middle of the pit. The audience relieved its feelings by making the usual Twelfth Night uproar, and the rest of the play was performed in dumb show. The new tragedy had failed. The docile, indomitable author, agreeing with the audience, withdrew it from the theatre to alter and try it again. “The new tragedy,” remarks Marais, “fell at the first representation. Dramatic poetry differs from epic, and one man has not all the talents.”

CHAPTER XIX.

VOLTAIRE A COURTIER.

IMPORTANT events were occurring at court during these years. A virtuous woman was coming to preside over it, as if to give the *régime* another chance for its life. Kind death, in August, 1723, relieved France of Cardinal Dubois, debauchee of sixty-seven, who died cursing the surgeons for the pain they had given him in trying to prolong his shameful existence. By way of epitaph, the Duke of St. Simon gives the list of the eight rich benefices held by this consecrated sarcasm, worth 324,000 francs per annum, as well as of his civil posts, which yielded 250,000; to say nothing of his annual bribe from England of 960,000 more. Funereal ceremonies of the usual magnificence were held in Notre Dame, Cardinal de Noailles officiating; "but," says honest St. Simon, "there was no oration; *they dared not hazard it!*"¹

They dared not, because the government of France was a despotism tempered by epigrams.

His master, the regent, followed him soon. In December of the same year, while sitting before the fire with the Duchess of Phalaris, one of his mistresses, chatting gayly enough with her before going in to the young king on business, the Duke of Orleans was seized with apoplexy, and died in half an hour. He was in the prime of his age, forty-nine, and owed his death wholly to sensual indulgences of all kinds, sustained with a continuity of excess of which no animal but man is capable, and few men besides Bourbons.

The person highest in rank after the Duke of Orleans was the Prince of Condé, then commonly styled the Duke of Bourbon, — an avaricious young man, not yet thirty-two, governed by his mistress, the Marquise de Prie. While the king, a boy of fourteen, was still in tears for his uncle's

¹ 19 Mémoires, 137.

sudden death, the Duke of Bourbon asked for the place of prime minister. The bewildered lad gave a nod of assent; and behold fair France the helpless prey of a reckless, fascinating woman! Such is personal government. In July, 1724, the king and court were the guests of the Duke of Bourbon at Chantilly, the magnificent seat of the Condés, twenty-four miles northeast of Paris, where there was a hunting-park of seven thousand acres, one of the finest in Europe. All that France had of splendid and alluring was gathered in that superb château, wherein the great Condé had loved to welcome the princes of the blood and the princes of the mind. The frequent presence of Racine, Boileau, and Molière had rendered this château a kind of classic edifice.

Strange to say, all these resounding events touched and nearly concerned our invalid poet. An intellectualized person of his temperament and constitution cannot undergo two bleedings, a course of medicine, two hundred pints of lemonade, and the small-pox without languishing a long time afterwards in ill health. In the summer of 1724, he fled from the noise of the Quai des Théatins and the hootings of the *parterre*, and accompanied the young Duke of Richelieu to Forges, twenty miles beyond Rouen, the waters of which were brought into repute by Cardinal de Richelieu in the reign of Louis XIII. To this day one of its springs is called "La Cardinale." Voltaire was much caressed at this time by the nobleman who bore the name rendered illustrious by the great statesman. We find him employed, in 1724, in selecting a "governor for the duke's pages," and choosing a young man of intelligence, noble birth, good appearance, a geometer, and "one every way suitable to pages." But the duke wanted a draughtsman, not a geometer, and thought the post beneath the merits of the candidate.

He improved in health at Forges, but not, as he thought, by drinking its acrid waters. "There is more vitriol," he wrote, "in a bottle of Forges water than in a bottle of ink; and, candidly, I do not believe that ink is so very good for the health." It was not indeed in his case, his passion for using it always making it difficult for him to regain lost vigor. Even here he was busy recasting "Mariamne," retouching "La Henriade," and writing, for one of his duke's *fêtes*, a one-

act comedy in verse, the agreeable and sprightly trifle called "L'Indiscret," read at Forges with drawing-room success. "Exact regimen," however, had its effect, and he was soon able, as he said, to think of something besides his bodily pains. "I am ashamed," he wrote to Madame de Bernières, "to present myself to my friends with a weak digestion and a downcast mind. I wish to give you only my beautiful days, and to suffer *incognito*."

A tragic event, which brought the royal festivities of Chantilly to an abrupt conclusion, detained him at Forges. The Duke of Richelieu and the Duke of Melun, while hunting one Saturday of this July in the great park of Chantilly, brought to bay a huge stag in a narrow defile, and the animal, in a blind fury, charged upon them. The Duke of Melun's horse, at the moment when he was trying to cross the stag, received in his side the full force of the blow, when horse, stag, and rider all fell together. The two sportsmen were alone. Richelieu rescued his friend from the struggling animals, staunched his bleeding wounds, and sustained him three quarters of an hour, until, the huntsmen coming up, the injured man was conveyed to the château. He lingered from Saturday afternoon until Monday morning at half past six, when he died in the Duke of Bourbon's arms, in the presence of all the court. The king instantly departed for Versailles, leaving death and desolation at this magnificent abode, where, until the accident, all had been adjusted and attuned to profuse and splendid hospitality. Richelieu, idle profligate as he was, was overwhelmed with sorrow. "I cannot abandon him in his grief," wrote Voltaire. He remained at Forges with the duke fifteen days longer, returning to Paris in September, where he lived at the Hôtel de Bernières "in solitude and suffering, relieving both by moderate labor."

A pleasing prospect of a long journey to new scenes rose before him in the month of his return to Paris. The Duke of Bourbon consoled the surviving Richelieu by appointing him ambassador to Vienna, and Voltaire hastened to get the place of ambassador's secretary for his comrade Thieriot, promising to follow him to Vienna as soon as he could work himself free of immediate literary engagements. "I told the duke," he wrote to Thieriot, "that, since I could not go so

soon to Vienna, I would send half of myself, and the other half would quickly follow ;" adding that he cared little for the "titled minxes of the court," which he renounced forever, "through the weakness of his stomach and the force of his reason." Great was his disappointment when he received in reply to his exultant letter a note from Thieriot, dryly and disdainfully refusing the post, saying that he was not made to be the domestic of a great lord. Voltaire, upon whom the idle young duke had devolved the business of finding a secretary, offered the place to another, who accepted it. Then he wrote to Thieriot, patiently explaining and apologizing, upon which Thieriot accepted also.

Here was an embarrassment. But Voltaire, irascible, susceptible, impetuous, was patience itself whenever the matter in hand was to serve a friend. He exhibited Thieriot to the ambassador in a light so pleasing that, finally, rather than lose such a treasure, Richelieu agreed to take two secretaries. Then Thieriot, to his friend's extreme mortification, declined the post again. Voltaire, with wonderful moderation, wrote to him, "You have caused me a little trouble by your irresolution. You have made me give two or three different replies to M. de Richelieu, who believed that I was trifling with him. I heartily forgive you since you remain with us. I did too much violence to my feelings when I wished to tear myself from you in order to make your fortune. If the same principle of friendship which forced me to send you to Vienna hinders you from going thither, and if, besides, you are content with your destiny, I am sufficiently happy, and have nothing more to desire except better health." And so ended the first of a long series of attempts, on the part of Voltaire, to get some better footing in the world for this thriftless, agreeable companion of his youth. Thieriot objected mortally to steady toil and leaving Paris, and he passed a long life in ingeniously avoiding both.

The year 1725 brought various good fortune to Voltaire. His "Mariamne," recast, was played in April with respectable success, having eighteen successive representations, besides many occasional repetitions and short runs, during the year. His little comedy of court life, "L'Indiscret," was played with the tragedy as an afterpiece, with applause, and both were

printed and pirated in the usual way. He was obliged to print both plays at his own expense, because, as he wrote, "the pirate editions cut the publisher's throat." He was gaining with the public in many ways, and doubtless other Frenchmen said in conversation what Mathieu Marais entered in his diary in April, 1725, "Voltaire is the greatest poet we possess."

If the court had been as sensitive as the church to satire, the censor would not have given him the privilege of printing "L'Indiscret," which exhibits court life and character very much in the spirit of Beaumarchais's "Figaro." The hero is a court puppy, who loses his "adorable widow" by blabbing boastfully of his conquest. "Colonel at thirteen," remarks the indiscreet lover, "I think it but *reasonable* to expect a marshal's *bâton* at thirty." Many other Figaro strokes mark this comedy; but the *régime* felt itself invincible and invulnerable, and therefore the little comedy got afloat upon the current, to amuse and assist to form unborn Beaumarchais. The boxes, as Marais reports, were not too well pleased to find themselves so accurately delineated; but the play succeeded, notwithstanding. Voltaire was winning credit and celebrity, which, as he remarked, are agreeable, but not nourishing. It does not improve an author's fortune, nor his temper, to print his works at his own expense against pirated editions at home and abroad, — two of the "Henriade," three of "Mariamne," and one of "L'Indiscret."

But a great event was impending in the summer of 1725, full of hope to poets and artists in that age of patronage and pensions: nothing less than the marriage of the rude boy-king, whom the "titled minxes of the court" had tried in vain to seduce, so well had the Abbé de Fleury made him learn his catechism. Whom should he marry? A friend of our poet, and of all poets, pointed out the lady.

This *régime* of personal government in France could not have long maintained itself if it had been tempered by epigrams only. It was tempered and saved by solid merit and genuine ability, won from the uncorrupt classes. The incompetent young man styled the Duke of Bourbon, prime minister of the king, had for secretary and man of confidence one of the best business heads in Europe, Paris-Duverney, one of four

able brothers, sons of an innkeeper. He was antidote in France to the inflating adventurer, John Law, and saved his country more than once from the imbeciles who patronized such adventurers. Paris-Duverney it was who suggested the policy which gave to the French court for forty years the presence of the virtuous woman just alluded to. Voltaire, who records this fact, was connected with Paris-Duverney in various ways for half a century, and owed to him, ten years later, a vast increase of fortune. "It was Paris-Duverney," says Voltaire, "who conceived the idea of marrying the king to the daughter of Stanislas Leczinski."¹

Both Stanislas and his daughter are characters in Voltaire's eventful story: the daughter at this period, the father at a later day.

Marie Leczinski, Queen of France from 1725 to 1768, makes her first appearance in history as an infant, twelve months old, lying at the bottom of a horse-trough in front of a village inn in Poland. She was the daughter of that young Stanislas whom Charles XII. placed upon the throne of Poland, after having driven from it its rightful occupant, Augustus the Strong. The reign of this young gentleman was short and troubled. Only a few days after his coronation, learning that he was about to be attacked by the dethroned king, he suddenly sent his family to a place of safety, under the guard of a faithful troop of soldiers. It was during this flight that the nurse of his daughter Marie, either from fatigue or terror, laid the child in the horse-trough and abandoned it to its fate. It was found the next morning by accident, and conveyed to its mother.

After reigning four years, King Stanislas, sharing in the misfortunes of the Swedish king, lost his crown, and became a wanderer over Europe. First he took refuge in Germany; then fled to Sweden; next he sought safety in Turkey; and finally established himself in one of the small German states, where he lived upon a small annuity which was irregularly paid. During these wanderings, which lasted many years, his daughter Marie grew to womanhood. She was a young lady of small stature and pleasing appearance, though not of striking beauty. Her education, conducted in part by her parents,

¹ Histoire du Parlement de Paris, chapter lxxviii.

embraced several languages, as well as drawing and music, and she was reared in the pious habits inculcated by the Catholic religion. At the age of twenty she had as little prospect of being Queen of France as any young lady in Europe. One morning her father, entering the room where she was seated at work with her mother, said, in a joyful tone, —

“Let us kneel and thank God!”

“Father,” said Marie, “are you recalled to the throne of Poland?”

“Ah, my daughter,” was the reply, “Heaven is far more favorable to us than that. You are Queen of France!”

As he said these words he showed her the letter in which the prime minister of France asked her hand in marriage for the young king, Louis XV.

This remarkable change of fortune was as much a surprise to France and to Europe as it was to herself. When Louis XV. inherited the throne of France he was, as we have seen, a sickly boy, five years of age. This poor little life was all there was between France and the danger of civil war; since, if he died, the Bourbon King of Spain had claims to the throne, and those claims would have been resisted by other princes of the reigning house. It is difficult for an American citizen to realize the fond anxiety with which the French people watched the growth and listened to bulletins of the health of this little boy. When he was sick the churches filled with people, who, prostrate upon their knees, implored his restoration; and when he appeared in Paris, in improved health and vigor, the whole city rejoiced, and blazed into an illumination in the evening. The Duke of Orleans had made a match for him with a daughter of the King of Spain, when she was but three years of age and Louis eight. To make assurance doubly sure, the little princess was brought to Paris, where she was to reside until of suitable age for marriage; and there, indeed, she lived for several years. In the mean time, the boy-king had been growing up into a vigorous and muscular youth. When he was but fifteen years of age, one of his courtiers said to him, “Sire, your majesty is old enough to give a dauphin to France.”

Upon this hint the ministry acted, and it was certainly a matter of the greatest importance to the kingdom that another

life should be interposed between France and civil war. But the Spanish princess, to whom the young king was solemnly pledged, was not yet eleven years of age, and Louis, from the moment of his first interview with her, had exhibited an aversion to her person. It was resolved, therefore, at the risk of mortally offending Spain, to send her home to Madrid, and look about Europe for another princess for the king's hand. By means of the French ministers resident at foreign courts, and by more private agents, a catalogue was drawn up of all the marriageable princesses in Europe, seventeen in number, with a description of the person, character, expectations, and religion of each. None of them, it appears, would quite answer the purpose. One came of a family in which madness was hereditary; another was a Protestant, and would object to be converted; another was already engaged; another was ill-looking; another was too young; another was of too little importance in the politics of Europe; another was said to be humpbacked; and another was suspected of being scrofulous. These objections being fatal to the pretensions of the seventeen, it occurred to the Duke of Bourbon's astute secretary that it would be a master stroke of policy to select a princess who would owe the throne entirely to that prince, and who would feel herself bound in common gratitude to exert all her influence in his favor.

It was this idea which led to the choice of Marie. When the news of the strange selection was buzzed about the court, one of the anti-Bourbon party spread the report that the Polish princess was subject to fits, which so terrified the ministry that they sent in haste a secret agent to the village in which Stanislas lived to inquire into the truth of the report. He sent home word that the lady had never had a fit, and was in all respects in sound condition for marriage. She was next accused of having something the matter with one of her hands, and this calumny was refuted by no less a person than the Cardinal de Rohan. All obstacles to the marriage being thus removed, the letter was written to which reference has already been made. Neither the father nor the daughter made the slightest objection to the match, although the princess was twenty-one and the king fifteen. Preparations for the marriage were made in the greatest haste. One of the secret

agents of the ministry sent a petticoat of the princess to Paris for the guidance of her dressmakers; also one of her gloves, and an old slipper for the benefit of her shoemaker. She was conveyed to Paris with all possible pomp and splendor, and the marriage was performed with the customary magnificence. The father of the bride took up his abode in one of the French provinces, where he lived to a great old age upon a munificent pension from the French government. Queen Marie appears to have been a truly estimable lady. Some sayings of hers which have come down to us do honor to her memory. The following, for example: "If there were no little people in the world, we should not be great, and we ought not to be great except for their sakes." "To boast of one's rank is to show that we are beneath our rank." "Good kings are slaves, and their people are free." "The treasures of the state are not ours; we have no right to spend in arbitrary gifts the money earned by the artisan and the laborer." "It is better to listen to those who cry to us from afar, 'Solace our misery,' than to those who whisper in our ears, 'Increase our fortunes.'"

It is pleasing to know that the object of the Duke of Bourbon in promoting this marriage was not accomplished. The Abbé de Fleury, preceptor to the king, had obtained that ascendancy over the dull boy that belonged to his place and character. Whatever virtue and purity this king ever possessed he owed to his governess, Madame de Ventadour, and to this priest, a man at least free from the lower vices of the court and time. It is not saying much for the tutor, but so much may be said. For ten years Louis XV. lived decently with his wife; and, at a later period, when he was the most licentious king in Europe, he was never quite at ease in his conscience. He was liable to fits of alarm, if not of contrition. It is recorded of him — oh, wondrous fact! — that he could not, with a good conscience, in his most debauched period go to bed without first kneeling down and saying his prayers! Such is the power and such is the impotence of early drill in pious observances! The coming of the good queen was followed within a few months by the abrupt dismissal of the Duke of Bourbon and his scandalous, extravagant De Prie. The virtuous, frugal, cautious Cardinal de Fleury ruled France for twenty years. The reign of mistresses was suspended for

a while ; the court was comparatively decent ; expenditure was curtailed ; a policy of peace was maintained ; and France had another chance of escaping revolution by reform. Cardinal de Fleury was not a Richelieu ; but, in the circumstances, he was, perhaps, as good and as great a minister as could have kept the place.

In the festivities of this royal marriage Voltaire took part, and it was the Marquise de Prie who gave him the opportunity. During the summer of 1724 he had paid court to her, as all the world in that century paid court to the woman who governed the man who governed the state. He sent her a copy of "L'Indiscret," with an epistle in verse, in which he assured her that if the adorable widow of his comedy had possessed *her* beauty the hero's blabbing would have been pardonable ; for what lover would not have been tempted to speak of such a mistress, either by excess of vanity or excess of tenderness ! He had his reward. Madame de Prie, before leaving Paris, gave him an order upon the door-keeper of her house at Fontainebleau, where the honeymoon was to be passed, assigning him rooms therein. "I shall see the marriage of the queen," he wrote to Madame de Bernières. "I shall compose verses for her, if she is worth the trouble. I would rather write verses for you, if you loved me." In September, therefore, with all the gay and splendid world of France, he was first at Versailles, then at Fontainebleau, bearing his part in the marriage festival, sometimes as poet, sometimes as spectator, always as expectant.

One incident, interesting to Americans, made such an impression on his mind that he mentions it three or four times in his works : "In 1725 I saw four savages who had been brought from the Mississippi to Fontainebleau. Among them was a woman, ash-colored like her companions, whom I asked, through their interpreter, whether she had ever eaten human flesh. 'Yes,' she replied, very coolly, as to an ordinary question." Writing thirty years after, he adds : "I appeared a little scandalized, when she excused herself by saying that it was better to eat a dead enemy than to let the wild beasts eat him ; the conquerors ought to have the preference."¹ It was a spectacle of extreme curiosity to the

¹ Essai sur les Mœurs, chap. cxlvi., and Dict. Philos., article Anthropophages.

French of 1725, the Indian lodge in the park of Fontainebleau; and to no one more interesting than to this bored poet.

He passed three tedious, laborious months at court; and his letters of the period show that, courtier as he was, and suitor of court favor, he felt all the ridicule of the situation, the unspeakable absurdity of the *régime* of which he desired to make part. I select a few sentences: —

[At Versailles, just before the marriage.] “Every one here pays court to Madame de Beseval, who is a distant relation of the queen. This lady, who has some *esprit*, receives with much modesty the marks of baseness which are given her. I saw her yesterday at the house of Marshal de Villars. Some one asked her what relation she was to the queen. She replied that queens have no relations. These nuptials of Louis XV. are an injury to poor Voltaire. They talk of not paying the pensions, and even of not preserving them; but in recompense a new tax is to be imposed, to buy laces and fabrics for Mademoiselle Leczinska. This is like the marriage of the sun, which made the frogs murmur. I have been but three days at Versailles, and already I wish myself out of it.”

[Fontainebleau, September 17th, after the marriage.] “Two noblemen died to-night. Assuredly, both of them took their time ill; for in the midst of all the hullabaloo of the king’s marriage, their deaths made not the least sensation. . . . Every one here is enchanted with the queen’s goodness and politeness. The first thing she did after her marriage was to distribute among the princesses and ladies of the palace all the magnificent trifles which they call her *casket*, consisting of jewels of every kind except diamonds. When she saw the casket wherein they were placed she said, ‘This is the first time in my life that I have been able to make presents.’ She had on a little rouge on her wedding-day, — as much as was necessary to keep her from looking pale. She fainted a moment in the chapel, but only for form’s sake. There was comedy the same day. I had prepared a little divertisement, which M. de Mortemart [first gentleman] was not willing to have executed. They gave in its place ‘Amphytryon’ and Molière’s ‘Le Médecin Malgré Lui,’ which did not seem too suitable. After supper there were fire-works of very little ingenuity or variety. . . . For the rest, there is a confusion here, a pressure, a tumult, that are frightful. During these first days of hubbub I shall avoid having myself presented to the queen. I shall wait until the crowd has subsided, and her majesty has recovered a little from the bewilderment caused by all this *sabbat*. Then I shall try to have

'Œdipe' and 'Mariamne' played before her. I shall dedicate both to her; and she has already sent me word that she would be very willing I should take that liberty. The king and queen of Poland (for here we no more recognize King Augustus) have sent to ask me for the poem of Henry IV., which the queen has already heard spoken of with eulogium. But nothing must be pressed."

[To Madame de Bernières, October 8th.] "I have not a moment to myself. We have had to perform 'Œdipe,' 'Mariamne,' and 'L'Indiscret.' I have been some time at Belébat with Madame de Prie. Besides that, I have been almost always in agitation, cursing the life of a courtier, vainly chasing a little good fortune which seemed to present itself to me, and which fled as soon as I thought I had it; in ill humor, and not daring to show it; seeing many ridiculous things, and not daring to speak of them; not ill with the queen; much in favor with Madame de Prie, — and all that doing nothing for me, except making me lose my time and keeping me from you. . . . Oh, madame, I am not in my element here. Have pity upon a poor man who has abandoned his country for a foreign land. Insensate that I am! In two days I set out to see King Stanislas; for there is no folly of which I am incapable."

[To Thieriot, October 17th.] "I have had the folly to abandon my talents and my friends for the illusions of the court, for expectations purely imaginary. . . . I have been very well received here by the queen. She has shed tears at the performance of 'Mariamne,' and she has laughed at 'L'Indiscret.' She speaks to me frequently; she calls me 'My poor Voltaire.' A fool would be content with all that; but unfortunately I have sense enough to feel that praise is of small account, that the rôle of a poet at court has always something in it a little ridiculous, and that it is not permitted to any one to be in this country of ours without some kind of status. Every day they give me hopes, which yield me little nourishment. You would hardly believe, my dear Thieriot, how tired I am of my court life. Henry IV. is very foolishly sacrificed to the court of Louis XV. I mourn the moments which I take away from him. The poor child already ought to have appeared in quarto, on fine paper, with a fair margin and handsome type. That will surely be done this winter, whatever happens. Epic poetry is my forte, or I am much deceived. . . . All the poets in the world, I believe, have come together at Fontainebleau. The queen is every day assassinated with Pindaric odes, sonnets, epistles, and marriage songs. I imagine she takes the poets for the court fools; and if so she is very right, for it is a great folly for a man of letters to be here, where he neither gives nor receives pleasure."

But at length, November 13th, he wrote in a more cheerful strain, and had an item of good news to communicate to his friends: "The queen has just given me from her privy purse a pension of fifteen hundred livres, which I did not solicit. This is a first step toward obtaining the things which I do ask. I am in good credit with the second prime minister, M. Paris-Duverney. I count upon the friendship of Madame de Prie. I begin to have a reasonable hope of being able sometimes to be useful to my friends."

He was now past thirty years of age. He had published a poem which the intelligent mind of his country had sealed with its warm approval. He had written three tragedies, two of which had succeeded upon the stage, had been read all over Europe with pleasure, and remain at this day part of the classic literature of his country. He had composed a hundred agreeable poems: some a little free, as the manner of that age was, many of them both pleasing and meritorious. He had written a graceful comedy, which, trifling as it was, had given innocent pleasure to more persons than one of the grand seigneurs of the period could rationally expect to please in a life-time of fourscore years. He had within him undeveloped capacities from which good works were to be hoped. All these things he had done; all this and more he was, in December, 1725, when he returned from court to Paris with his little pension in his pocket, and hope in his heart of greater things to follow. Besides his personal merits and his solid claims, he possessed artificial advantages, such as the favor of the queen, of her father, of the prime minister's mistress and secretary, as well as a wide acquaintance with the grandees of the kingdom. What was he, then? What human rights had he in his native land? Was he anvil at thirty, or was he hammer? If, on this subject, he had cherished any vainglorious doubts, he was now to be rudely and finally undeceived. He was to discover that he was nobody in France; or, as Alexis Piron expressed it, "nothing, not even an Academician."

CHAPTER XX.

IN THE BASTILLE AGAIN.

At the opera in Paris, one evening in December, 1725, Voltaire was conversing with acquaintances in the lobby between the acts; perhaps "laying down the law" with some positiveness, as was his right. Who should lay down the law of the drama if not he? Among the by-standers was the Chevalier de Rohan, a member of historic families which had given to France cardinals, generals, dukes, princes, and ministers in every century since the kingdom was consolidated. A Cardinal de Rohan was a personage of weight and splendor at that time, predecessor of the Cardinal de Rohan who figured sixty years later in the affair of the diamond necklace. This chevalier, forty-three years of age, a dissolute man-about-town, broke into the conversation in an insolent tone, saying, —

"Monsieur de Voltaire, Monsieur Aronet, what *is* your name?"

The answer which the poet made on this occasion is not recorded, nor whether he made any. Two days after, he was at the theatre, and there again he met the Chevalier de Rohan, — either in the warming-room (*le chauffoir*) or in the box of the actress Madame Lecouvreur, who was present. The chevalier repeated the offensive question, when Voltaire replied, —

"I do not trail after me a great name, but I know how to honor the name I bear."

Another version is, "I begin my name; the Chevalier de Rohan finishes his."

Rohan raised his cane as if to strike; Voltaire placed his hand upon his sword; the actress fainted; and thus the scene was brought to an end, Voltaire the victor. Two or three days after, the poet was dining with his old patron and

protector, the Duke of Sully, when a servant came to his chair, and informed him that some one wished to speak to him at the door of the mansion. The Hôtel de Sully, where these events occurred still stands, and bears the number 143 Rue Saint-Antoine. Upon reaching the street, he saw two hackney-coaches standing near. Two men came up to him, and asked him to stand upon the steps of the nearest carriage, which he was proceeding to do, supposing that the person who desired to speak to him was in that vehicle. At the moment when his foot touched the step, he was seized by the coat, and a shower of blows fell upon his shoulders. A voice from the other coach was heard, crying out,—

“Don't hit him upon the head! Something good may come out of that.”

Voltaire recognized the voice as that of the Chevalier de Rohan, whom he saw sitting in the coach, watching and directing the proceedings. Indeed, the brave knight, in relating the exploit to his intimates, would say, “I was in command of the laborers” (*les travailleurs*), using the military term for the men detailed to throw up intrenchments. Voltaire at length tore himself from the clutch of the hired ruffians, and made his way back to the dining-room, where he related what had occurred. He asked the Duke of Sully to make common cause with him in obtaining legal redress for an outrage done upon his guest, at his own door, and therefore an affront to the master of the house. He besought the duke, at least, to go with him to a commissary of police, and depose to the facts within his knowledge. Rohan was cousin to the duke, and it now appeared that the Duke of Sully was neither aristocrat enough nor man enough to seize this chance of honoring his order and himself. He refused to stand by his guest. Voltaire rushed from the hôtel, never again to enter an abode where, for nearly ten years, he had been on the footing almost of a younger brother.

He hurried away to the opera, where he found Madame de Prie, the mistress of the Duke of Bourbon, not yet deposed from the ministry, though soon to be. To her he related the unspeakable wrong he had suffered. She sympathized with him, took his part with the minister, and, for a few days, they hoped the Duke of Bourbon would do him some kind of jus-

tice. But, it seems, a friend of the Rohans neutralized the influence of the mistress by showing the one-eyed duke an epigram, addressed to Madame de Prie, and falsely attributed to Voltaire, which ran thus: "Io, without seeming to feign, knew how to deceive all the hundred eyes of Argus. We have only one eye to fear; why not be happy?" Nor was the minister so firm in his seat at that moment that he could safely offend so powerful a family as the Rohans. It was soon manifest that the injured man had nothing to expect from the court, and if ever his wrong was avenged it must be by his own hand or arm. Meanwhile, the secret police received orders to keep an eye upon both knight and poet, and to take measures for preventing a renewal of strife between them. The language of these orders shows what the great world thought of the affair.

The lieutenant of police to the commissary of detectives, March 23, 1726: "Sir, His Royal Highness is informed that Monsieur the Chevalier de Rohan sets out this day; and, as he may have some new procedure [*procédé*] with the Sieur de Voltaire, or the latter commit some madcap act (*coup d'étourdi*), he desires you to have them observed in such a way that nothing of the kind may happen."¹

The lieutenant of police uses the polite word *procédé* when anticipating the conduct of a Rohan, and the contemptuous phrase *coup d'étourdi* when describing the probable behavior of Voltaire. He was not far wrong. For a private person without powerful protection to attempt, in 1726, to get justice against an adversary closely allied to princes in church and state was indeed the act of an *étourdi*. This valiant chevalier never received the slightest reprimand for his conduct in this affair, nor was his promotion in the army retarded by it. At this time he held a rank equivalent to brigadier-general, and, within ten years, without having performed or witnessed any warlike exploit but this battle with a poet, he rose to the rank of lieutenant-general. Nor is there reason to think that the outrage excited indignation in the public mind. Epigrams and other versified satire then played the part which scurrilous newspapers have since occasionally filled in our large cities. We do not at present get into a passion of noble wrath

¹ Jeunesse de Voltaire, page 353.

when the irrepressible editor of such a newspaper is assailed either in his pocket or in his person. Voltaire, in all his literary career of sixty years, rarely wrote ill-natured verse, and never except under strong provocation; but, unfortunately, he had the credit of half the stinging satire that circulated in his early time. "We should be unhappy, indeed," said the Bishop of Blois, when he heard of this affair, "if poets had no shoulders." There is a lurking baseness in many minds which compels them to side always with the man who is at the comfortable end of the stick. Six weeks after the outrage, Advocate Marais wrote to a correspondent:—

"I send you a piece of verse all fresh against M. de Fontenelle. It is very malign, — worse than blows with a cane. Those of Voltaire are spoken of no more. He keeps them. People remember the reply of the late Duke of Orleans when Voltaire asked for justice on a similar occasion: '*You have had it.*' . . . The poor Beaten shows himself as often as he can at court, in the city; but no one pities him, and those whom he thought to be his friends have turned their backs upon him. The rumor runs that the poet Roy has also had his basting (*bastonnade*) for an epigram. And so, at last, behold our poets, through fear of the stick, reduced to their legitimate work of learning and pleasing."¹

Thus the commonplace man interprets an affair of this nature; and, doubtless, all that was ordinary and all that was mean in the idle Paris of that day commented so upon the enormous, the inexpiable wrong done upon the man destined to give his name to his era. Doubtless, too, the gift of witty utterance was abused, and epigrams themselves sometimes needed "tempering." "What is the common price of an oak stick, sir?" said Dr. Johnson to Davies. "Sixpence." "Why, then, sir, give me leave to send your servant for a shilling one. I'll have a double quantity, for I am told Foote means to take me off, as he calls it, and I am determined he shall not do it with impunity." Foote was notified, and forbore to take off Dr. Johnson.

Paris was very familiar at that time with the appeal to the stick in disputes between the owners and the movers of the world. Marais alludes to the poet Roy's mishap. The Count

¹ 3 Marais, 393.

de Clermont having been elected one of the forty members of the French Academy, Roy had taken the liberty of saying that thirty-nine plus zero had never yet made forty. This harmless joke subjected him to blows. The illustrious Molière, after the production of his *Misanthrope*, passed several days in expectation of similar treatment from a person supposed to have been represented in the play. He knew well that he had no protection, and could obtain no redress, from the law. Moncrif, for some jests in his "History of Cats," was assailed by blows in the streets. Advocate Barbier relates an incident of 1721, to this effect: The Duke de Meilleraie, a fool and an *étourdi*, while driving his phaeton over one of the narrow bridges of Paris, was in danger of running down a horse carrying in a *panier* several little children. A priest who was passing remonstrated; whereupon the duke sprang to the ground and "gave him twenty strokes with his whip." The priest, through his superior, complained. The Prince de Rohan, the duke's father-in-law, tried to pacify him; but he demanded reparation, and, being a priest, obtained it. The offending nobleman was obliged to apologize in the presence of all the priests of the convent, to settle upon the injured man an annuity of two hundred francs, and to pass a year in the château of Vincennes. No man of letters, unconnected with the privileged orders, could have had such redress. So many men of letters were subjected to outrage of this nature in that age that the records have furnished M. Victor Fournel with the material for a volume upon the "Rôle of the Stick in Literary History." Literature had to make its way in France between the cudgel and the Bastille, after it had outlived the period of the wheel and the fagot.

In such a time, in such a country, what ought Voltaire to have done? He must have read the song circulated in March, 1726, in which he was said to have been brevetted *batonnier*, staff-bearer to his regiment. He probably heard of the verb newly added to the French language, *voltairiser*, to *voltaire*, to beat. What should he have done? I cannot answer the question. To have submitted in silence to such an infamy he must have been either more or less than man. He was neither. To have taken "wild justice," as Lord Bacon expresses it, by putting to death the poor creature who had

wronged him, would have involved the spoiling, if not the loss, of his own life. He could have taken a frightful vengeance by his pen, as he often did when the injury was less; but on this occasion he felt the outrage too keenly to give his feelings effective expression. Effective expression is *art*, and the artist must have a tranquil mind. Othello was the man in the world who was farthest from being able either to write or to play the Moor of Venice. As to the courts of justice, had he not tried them in the case of Captain Beauregard, and involved himself in endless expense and trouble, only to remain in the thoughtless mind "the man who had got himself caned"?

He resolved to challenge Rohan to mortal combat with the sword, a weapon which he had worn for many years, and knew how to use about as well as a poet of the present time knows how to box. The equalizing pistol was not then employed on "the field of honor." He now abstained from his usual haunts, took lessons in fencing, and sought the advice of men learned in the art of polite combat, not suspecting that he was under surveillance of the police. He was determined not to throw away his life by going to the field too soon, and, accordingly, he spent nearly four months in acquiring skill with his weapon.

April 16, 1726, the lieutenant of police sent important information to his chief: —

"The Sieur de Voltaire intends to insult the Chevalier de Rohan immediately, and with *éclat*. Several times during the last six weeks he has changed both his residence and his quarter. We have information that he is now at the house of one Leynault, a fencing-master, Rue St. Martin, where he lives in very bad company. It is said that he is in relations with some soldiers of the guards, and that several bullies [*bretteurs*] frequent his lodgings. Whatever truth there may be in these last reports, it is certain that he has very bad designs, and it is sure also that he has had one of his relations [Daumart] come from the country, who is to accompany him in the combat. This relation is a more moderate man than M. de Voltaire, and desires to calm him, but it is impossible. He is more irritated and more furious than ever in his conduct and in his conversation. All this intelligence determines the lieutenant to put the king's orders into execution, if possible, this very night, judging it to be his duty to prevent the disorder of which he has been distinctly notified."

That evening, or the next, Voltaire and Thieriot were at the Théâtre Français, and observed that the Chevalier de Rohan was, as usual, in the box of Madame Lecouvreur. During the evening, they went to the door of the box, which Voltaire entered, leaving Thieriot outside, within hearing. As Thieriot used to tell the story in old age, Voltaire addressed Rohan thus:—

“Monsieur, if some affair of interest has not made you forget the outrage of which I have to complain, I hope that you will give me satisfaction for it.”

The chevalier accepted the challenge, naming time and place, — St. Martin's Gate, the next morning at nine. But the next morning at nine Voltaire was in the Bastille. He was arrested, as it appears, after the scene in the box, either near the theatre or at his lodgings. It is certain that he awoke on the morning of April 18, 1726, within the château of the Bastille, a guest of the king, and so missed his appointment. He was provided, according to the official report, with pocket pistols at the time of his arrest; evidently an *étourdi* of desperate character. Two respectable families were relieved by the *lettre de cachet* which deprived Voltaire of his weapons and his liberty, the Rohans and the Arouets. The lieutenant of police remarked, in his report of the arrest, that “the family of the prisoner applauded unanimously and universally the wisdom of an order which kept the young man from committing some new folly, and the worthy persons of whom that family was composed from the mortification of sharing the confusion of it.”

Considering all the circumstances, the arrest was, perhaps, the kindest thing such a government could have done, and it probably gratified every person who really wished well to the prisoner. The measure, among other effects, brought about a reaction of public feeling in his favor. The veteran soldier, the Duke of Villars, so often in later years the host and familiar correspondent of Voltaire, records in his *Mémoires* that the public now censured, and, as he thought, justly censured, all parties: Voltaire, for having offended the Chevalier de Rohan; the chevalier, for having committed a crime worthy of death, in causing a citizen to be beaten; the government, for not punishing a notoriously bad action, and for

having the beaten man put into the Bastille to tranquilize the beater."¹

This was probably the general feeling at the moment. The chevalier was evidently held in odium, and the belief was general, though mistaken, that Voltaire had been arrested at the solicitation of the Rohans, who gave out that the chevalier, being lame from a fall, was not in fighting trim. A report was also circulated that the poet, in the violence of his rage, had gone to Versailles and asked for the chevalier at the very door of the Cardinal de Rohan's august abode! The captive, upon being established once more at the grim château, wrote to the minister in charge of the Department of Paris a spirited and not unbecoming note:—

“The *Sieur de Voltaire* very humbly represents that he was assaulted by the brave Chevalier de Rohan, assisted by six hamstringers, behind whom he was boldly posted; that ever since he has constantly sought to repair, not his own honor, but that of the chevalier, which has proved too difficult. If he went to Versailles, it is most untrue that it was for the purpose of asking for the Chevalier de Rohan at the house of the Cardinal de Rohan. It is very easy for the *Sieur de Voltaire* to prove the contrary, and he consents to remain in the Bastille the rest of his life, if he deceives on this point. He asks permission to take his meals at the table of the governor of the Bastille, and to be allowed to receive visitors. With still more earnestness he requests permission to go at once to England. If there is any doubt of his desire to depart thither, an officer can go with him as far as Calais.”

The minister was complaisant. An order was at once sent to the Bastille, in the king's name, to the effect that the prisoner should have every liberty and privilege consistent with his safe-keeping. He dined at the governor's table, with other favored guests of the king. His friends, roused by his captivity, flocked in to see him in such numbers that the minister was alarmed, and sent a new order, limiting his visitors to six, to be designated by the prisoner. Thieriot dined with him almost every day, and brought him English books, which he studied diligently. An old clerk of his father was much with him, arranging affairs of business. Madame de Berni-

¹ 23 *Mémoires*, 323.

ères and other ladies of his circle shone in upon him, now and then. Among the prisoners, also, were agreeable persons, male and female. And so the days passed in business, in conversation, in eager study of the English language; not without occasional passionate outbursts against the injustice of which he was a victim. He asked the lieutenant of police, one day, —

“What is done with people who forge *lettres de cachet*?”

“They are hanged,” was the reply.

“It is always well done,” said Voltaire, “in anticipation of the time when those who sign genuine ones shall be served in the same way.”¹

His captivity on this occasion lasted fifteen days. Arrested April 17th, he was released May 2d, on condition of binding himself to go at once to England. But the minister did not rely upon his promise; for Condé, the chief turnkey of the Bastille, was ordered “to accompany him as far as Calais, and to see him embark and set sail from that port.” The prisoner sent this news to Madame de Bernières, and asked her to lend him her traveling carriage for the journey, and to come at once to see him, for the last time, with Madame du Deffand and Thieriot. “To-morrow, Wednesday,” he wrote to her, “all who wish to see me can enter freely. I flatter myself that I shall have the opportunity of assuring you once more in my life of my true and respectful attachment.” May 3d he entered the chaise at the Bastille gate, with Condé, and was driven, in two days, to Calais, where good friends entertained him four days, while he was waiting for the sailing of the packet. He embarked, at length, and saw his native land recede from view.

His powerful friends at Paris did not forget him. Some weeks after his departure from the Bastille, the Count de Morville, minister for foreign affairs, who had been much his friend for several years, interposed in his behalf. The Walpoles were then supreme in England: Sir Robert being prime minister, his eldest son a new peer, his brother Horace ambassador at the French court, and as noted in the diplomacy of that generation as his nephew and namesake of Strawberry Hill was in the society of the next. “Old Horace

¹ 4 Œuvres de Voltaire, 122.

Walpole," at the instance of Count de Morville, wrote, May 29, 1726, a letter, commending the exile to Bubb Dodington, a gentlemen of great estate, fond of gathering men of letters under his roof:—

"DEAR SIR, — Mr. Voltaire, a French poet, who has wrote several pieces with great success here, being gone for England in order to print by subscription an excellent poem, called Henry IV., which, on account of some bold strokes in it against persecution and the priests, cannot be printed here; M. de Morville, the Mæcenas, or, I may truly say, the Dodington here, for the encouragement of wit and learning, has earnestly recommended it to me to use my credit and interest for promoting this subscription among my friends; on which account, as well as for the sake of merit, I thought I could apply myself nowhere more properly than to you; and I hope this will answer the particular view and interest which I have in it myself, which is to renew a correspondence so agreeable to me; who am, with the greatest truth and affection, sir, your most obedient and most humble servant,

H. WALPOLE."

There were circumstances in the politics of the moment which made the Walpoles particularly desirous of obliging Count de Morville. This letter therefore opened to the poet the great whig houses of the kingdom, while his acquaintance with Bolingbroke gave him favorable access to tory circles. He knew, as yet, very little English; but at that time, George I. being King of England, French was the language of the court, and during a part of every season a company of French comedians performed in London, — "the French vermin," Aaron Hill called them in 1721.

Voltaire was going to a very foreign land, farther then from France than Australia is now from the United States; a land less known to Frenchmen of that day than any land on earth now is to us. It was the time, too, when French and English accepted the theory that, being neighbors, only twenty-one miles apart, and having more reasons to be friends than any other two nations on the globe, they were "natural enemies." At least, such was the conviction of the average English mind. "We can do without the English coming among us," wrote Advocate Marais, in 1725, "for they do not love us, and are very haughty with us, notwithstanding our politeness and our civility." Happily, the educated classes of every land have

many dear interests in common, and some of them get above the grosser provincial prejudices. J. B. Rousseau had been in England in 1721, and found there subscribers enough to a quarto edition of his poems to put into his pocket a profit of five hundred pounds sterling.¹

Voltaire, as his letters show, carried with him across the channel a heart filled with bitterness and rage. The indignity he had received was one of those which even commonplace men bear with equanimity only when they are suffered by others. He could not get over it. The wrong was too recent, and it came upon him with the force of accumulation; for this was the second time that he had been obliged to endure it. Satiric poets of the day insisted that it was the third time, and they did not neglect to repeat the statement whenever opportunity invited. Could he ever live in France on the principle that, as often as he suffered gross indignity, it was to be himself who should receive the stigma of public punishment, while the man who had committed the outrage showed himself nightly, in agreeable and distinguished boxes at the theatre, complacent and boastful? Could he ever frequent the haunts of men, bearing upon his person a label, legible to every passer-by, THIS IS THE MAN WHO MAY BE BEATEN!

¹ 42 *Nouvelle Biographie Générale*, 734.

CHAPTER XXI.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF ENGLAND.

ENGLAND gave the exile a smiling welcome. The account which he afterwards wrote of his arrival and of his first impressions of the country must not be taken quite literally. There is evidently that mingling in it of fact, fancy, and banter which he was often obliged to employ in treating ticklish subjects in the land of the Bastille, and which became at length habitual with him. Instead of landing at Dover, as travelers usually did, he sailed, as it appears, up the Thames as far as Greenwich, five miles below London, and there he first set foot on British soil.

It was one of the most beautiful days of May. The sky, he records, was without a cloud, and a soft breeze from the west tempered the sun's heat, and disposed all hearts to joy. It chanced also to be the day of the great Greenwich Fair, which was then a day of festivity to Londoners, who came in crowds to witness games, races, and regattas. The river was covered, he says, with two rows of merchant-ships for the space of six miles, with their sails all spread to do honor to the king and queen, who were upon the river in a gilded barge, preceded by boats with bands of music, and followed by a thousand wherries, each rowed by two men in breeches and doublet, with large silver plates upon their shoulders. "There was not one of these oarsmen," remarks the stranger, "who did not assure me, by his face, his dress, and his excellent condition [*embonpoint*] that he was a freeman, and lived in plenty."

Near the river, in Greenwich Park, four miles in circumference, he observed a prodigious number of well-formed young people on horseback, cantering around a race-course marked with white posts. Among them were women, who galloped up and down with much grace. But he was es-

pecially pleased with the girls on foot, most of whom were clad in Indian stuffs. Many of them were beautiful; all were well made; and there was a neatness in their dress, a vivacity in their movements, and an air of satisfaction in their faces that made them all pleasing. Roaming about the Park, he came to a smaller race-course, not more than five hundred feet long. "What is this for?" he asked. He was told that this was for a foot-race, while the larger course was for horses. Near one of the posts of the large circle was a man on horseback holding in his hand a silver pitcher, and at the end of the smaller course were two poles, with a large hat at the top of one, and a chemise floating like a flag from the other. Between the two poles stood a stout man bearing a purse. The pitcher, he learned, was the prize for the horse-race, and the purse for the foot-race. But what of the hat and the chemise? He was "agreeably surprised" to be told that there was to be a race by the girls, and that the winner was to receive, besides the purse, the chemise, "as a mark of honor," while the winning man was to have the hat.

Continuing his rambles, he had the good fortune to fall in with some English merchants to whom he had letters of introduction. These gentlemen, he says, did the honors of the festival with the eagerness and the cordiality of men who are happy themselves, and wish to make others sharers in their joy. They had a horse brought for him; they sent for refreshments; and took care to get him a place whence he could comfortably view the races, the river, and vast London in the distance. At first he thought himself transported to the Olympic Games; but when he beheld the beauty of the Thames, the fleets of ships, the immensity of London, he "blushed to have compared Greece with England." Some one told him that at that very moment there was a "combat of gladiators" in progress at London; and then he thought he was with the ancient Romans. Near him on the stand was a Danish courier, who had only arrived that morning, and was to set out on his return in the evening. "He appeared to me," says Voltaire, "overcome with joy and wonder. He believed that this nation was always gay, that the women were all beautiful and animated, that the sky of

England was always clear and serene, that people there thought only of pleasure, and that every day in the year was like this. He went away without being undeceived. For my part, I was more enchanted even than my Dane."

Such were his first hours in England. Ben Franklin was a journeyman printer in London then. What more likely than that he was at Greenwich that day? He may have brushed past the eager Frenchman, whom he was to meet in such singular circumstances fifty-two years after. He may have been one of the stout, well-dressed, fresh-complexioned youths whom Voltaire admired galloping about in the Park; for at Greenwich Fair many young fellows rode who trudged the rest of the year on foot.

Voltaire was not long in learning that England was not always clad in smiles. He was in London the same evening, probably at the house of Lord Bolingbroke, which was usually the place of his abode in London, and to which his letters from France were addressed.

In the course of his first evening, as he relates, he met some ladies of fashion. He spoke to them of the "ravishing spectacle" which he had witnessed at Greenwich, not doubting that they also had witnessed it, and had formed part of the gay assemblage of ladies galloping round the course. He was a little surprised, however, to observe that they had not that air of vivacity which people usually exhibit who have just returned from a day's pleasure. On the contrary, they were constrained and reserved, sipped their tea, made a great noise with their fans, talked scandal, played cards, or read the newspaper. At length, one of these fine ladies, "more charitable than the rest," informed the puzzled foreigner that people of fashion never abased themselves so far as to attend miscellaneous gatherings like the one which had given him so much delight; that all those pretty girls, clad in the fabrics of India, were only servants and villagers; that those handsome young men, so well mounted, and cantering so gayly in the Park, were nothing but scholars and apprentices on hired horses. These unexpected statements he could not believe, and he felt himself moved to anger against the lady who made them.

Bent on pursuing his investigations into the character of

this strange people, he went, the next day, into the city, to find the merchants and aldermen who had been so cordial to him at his "supposed Olympic Games." In a coffee-house, which was dirty, ill furnished, badly served, and dimly lighted, he found most of those gentlemen who, on the afternoon before, had been so affable and good-humored. Not a man of them recognized him. He ventured to address a remark to some of them. They either made no reply at all, or else merely answered yes or no. He imagined he must have offended them. He tried to remember if he had rated the fabrics of Lyons above theirs, if he had said that the French cooks were better than the English, if he had intimated that Paris was a more agreeable city than London, if he had hinted that time passed more pleasantly at Versailles than at St. James's, or if he had been guilty of any other enormity of that kind. No, his conscience acquitted him of all guilt. > At length, "with an air of vivacity that appeared very strange to them," he took the liberty of asking one of them why they were all so melancholy. The prospect of being able to "chaff" a Frenchman appears to have put a little animation into this group of silent Britons. One of them replied, with a scowl, "The wind is east." At this moment one of their friends came up, who said, with an unmoved countenance, "Molly has cut her throat this morning. Her lover found her dead in her bedroom, with a bloody razor at her side." The company, "who all were Molly's friends," received this horrid intelligence without so much as lifting their eyebrows. One of them merely asked what had become of the lover. "He has bought the razor," quietly remarked one of the company.

The stranger, who seemed to take all this seriously and affects to relate it seriously, could not refrain from inquiring further into such a terrible tragedy. Appalled at once at the event and at the indifference of the company, he asked what could have induced a girl, apparently fortunate, to put an end to her existence in so revolting a manner. They only replied that the wind was east. Not being able to perceive anything in common between an east wind and the suicide of a young girl or the melancholy humor of the merchants, he abruptly left the coffee-house, and sought again his fashionable friends at court. There, too, all was sad;

and nobody could talk about anything but the east wind. He thought of the Dane whom he had met on the stand at Greenwich Fair, and was inclined to laugh at the false idea he was carrying home with him of the English climate; but, to his amazement, he found that the climate was having its effect upon himself,—he could not laugh! Expressing his surprise to one of the court physicians, the doctor told him not to be astonished so soon, for in the months of November and March he would have cause indeed to wonder. *Then* people hanged themselves by dozens, everybody was sick with low spirits, and a black melancholy overspread the whole nation; for in those months the wind blew most frequently from the east. “This wind,” continued the doctor, “is the bane of our island. The very animals suffer from it, and wear a dejected look. Men robust enough to stand this cursed wind lose at least their good humor. Every one shows a severe countenance and has a mind disposed to desperate resolutions. It was an east wind that cut off the head of Charles I. and dethroned James II.” Then, whispering in the ear of the Frenchman, he added, “If you have a favor to ask at court, never ask it unless the wind is west or south.”

It was not alone the courtiers and the merchants who were disposed to amuse themselves with this inquisitive foreigner. He was in a boat one day upon the Thames. One of the oarsmen, seeing that he had a Frenchman for a passenger, began to boast of the superior liberty of his country, and declared, with an oath, that he would rather be a Thames boatman than a French archbishop. The next day, Voltaire relates, he saw this very man at the window of a prison, stretching his hand through the bars. “What do you think now of a French archbishop?” cried Voltaire. “Ah, sir,” replied the man, “the abominable government we have! They have forced me away from my wife and children to serve in a king’s ship, and have put me in prison and chained my feet, for fear I should run away before the ship sails.” A Frenchman who was with Voltaire at the time confessed that he felt a malicious pleasure in seeing that the English, who reproached the French with their servitude, were as much slaves as they. “I had a sentiment more humane,” remarks Voltaire. “I was grieved that there was no more liberty

on earth." He consoled himself, also, with observing that, if the king impressed sailors, everybody in England could speak and write with sufficient freedom. "I have seen four very learned treatises against the reality of the miracles of Jesus Christ printed here with impunity, at a time when a poor bookseller was put into the pillory for publishing a translation of *"La Religieuse en Chemise."* He thought it a strange British inconsistency that the government should permit the printing of heresy and punish the publication of indecency. A few days after, he observed another oddity at Newmarket. He was told that there he would see the true Olympic Games. He saw, indeed, a concourse of noblemen, the king and royal family, and a "prodigious number of the swiftest horses in Europe flying around the course, ridden by little postilions in silk jackets;" but he also saw "jockeys of quality betting against one another, who put into this solemnity more of swindling than magnificence."¹ He preferred Greenwich Fair to Newmarket races.

These may be taken as his first impressions of England; and probably the strange things he saw on every side distracted and amused him for a few days or weeks. But he had not come to England to stay. He had promised the minister to go to England; but he had entered, so far as we know, into no engagement as to the length of his stay. A few weeks after his arrival, he returned secretly to France, in quest of Rohan. He concealed himself there, and, as it seems, wore some disguise. He saw no member of his family: not his sister, whom he loved; still less his brother, whom he did not love. He did not let his comrade, Thieriot, know that he had been in Paris until he was safe out of it, perhaps at Rouen, more than once his hiding-place. From his retreat in France he wrote, August 12, 1726, to Thieriot a long and melancholy letter. He remained during many months of this year in the depths of gloom.

"I will confess to you, my dear Thieriot [he wrote], that I made a little journey to Paris lately. Since I did not see you, you will easily conclude that I saw no one. I sought but a single man, whom the instinct of his poltroonery concealed from me, as if he had divined that I was on his track. At last, the fear of being discovered

¹ 35 Œuvres de Voltaire, 7.

made me leave more precipitately than I came. I am still uncertain whether I shall return to London. England is a country, I know, where all the arts are honored and recompensed; where there is a difference in conditions, but none between man and man except that of merit. It is a country where men think freely and nobly, unrestrained by servile fear. If I should follow my inclination, it is there that I should fix myself, if only to learn how to think. But I know not if my limited fortune, much disordered by my frequent journeys, my bad health, now worse than ever, and my preference for the most profound seclusion, will permit me to encounter the clatter and bustle of Whitehall and London. I am well introduced in that country, and I am expected there with cordiality enough; but I cannot assure you that I shall make the voyage. I have but two things to do in my life: one, to risk it with honor as soon as I can; and the other, to pass what shall remain of it in the obscurity of a retreat suited to my way of thinking, to my misfortunes, and to my knowledge of men.

“I abandon with good heart my pensions from the king and queen; regretting only not to have been able to secure you a share of them. It would be a consolation to me in my solitude to think that I had been able, once in my life, to be of some use to you; but I am fated to be unfortunate in all ways. The greatest pleasure an honest man can feel, that of giving pleasure to his friends, is denied to me. . . . If I have still some friends who pronounce my name in your hearing, speak to them of me with moderation, and cherish the remembrance which they are willing to preserve of me.”

He remained in concealment for about two months; then crossed the Channel once more, and prepared to settle in England. A budget of letters awaited him, the first he had received since leaving the Bastille. Among them was one from a Mademoiselle Bessières, who had been an inmate of his father's house, and was in some way closely allied to the family. She may have been his governess. From her he now received the intelligence of his only sister's death. The letter which he wrote in reply was all tenderness and contrition. Weaned from the great world which had flattered, deluded, and abandoned him, his heart softened toward his kindred and the friends of his childhood, even toward that Jansenist of a brother of his, who, as he thought, had behaved less like a brother than ever to him since his father's estate had been in litigation. Thus he wrote to Mademoiselle Bessières, October 15, 1726:—

“What can I say to you, mademoiselle, about the death of my sister, if not that it would have been far better for our family and for me if I had been taken away in her stead? It is not for me to speak to you of the little importance I attach to this passage, so short and so difficult, which is called life. Upon that subject you have ideas more enlightened than I, and drawn from purer sources. I am acquainted only with the sorrows of life, but you know their remedies; and the difference between us is that between patient and doctor.

“I pray you, mademoiselle, to have the goodness to fulfill even to the end the charitable zeal which you deign to have for me on this mournful occasion. Either prevail upon my brother to give me, without a single moment’s delay, some news of his health, or else give me some yourself. He alone remains to you of all my father’s family, which you regarded as your own. As for me, you must no more count me. Not that I do not still live, so far as regards the respect and affection that I owe to you; but I am dead for all else. You are greatly mistaken — permit me to say it to you with tenderness and grief — in supposing that I have forgotten you. I have committed many faults in the course of my life. The chagrins and sufferings which have marked almost all my days have often been my own work. I feel how little worthy I am. My weaknesses seem pitiful to me, and my faults strike me with horror. But God is my witness that I love virtue, and that therefore I am tenderly attached to you for my whole life. Adieu; I embrace you. Allow me to use this expression with all the respect and all the gratitude which I owe to Mademoiselle Bessières.”

In a similar strain he wrote the next day to Madame de Bernières, telling her that he was more dead to the world even than his dead sister, and entreating her to forget everything about him except the moments when she had assured him she would always be his friend. “Reckon the moments when I may have displeased you among the number of my misfortunes, and love me from generosity, if you cannot any longer from inclination.”

To complete his unhappiness, he suffered a considerable loss of money soon after his arrival in England. He brought with him a letter of credit upon Acosta, a Jewish banker, upon presenting which he received a reply which Wagnière thus reports: “Sir, I am very sorry; I cannot pay you; for, in the name of the Lord, I went into bankruptcy three days ago.”¹

¹ 1 Mémoires sur Voltaire, par Longchamp and Wagnière, 23.

Voltaire, thirty years after, used to tell this story in his bantering manner, and state the amount of his loss at twenty thousand francs. The banker, he used to say, had "the generosity" to pay him some guineas, which a bankrupt could not have been compelled to do; and secretary Wagnière adds that "the king of England, having heard of the stranger's embarrassment, sent him a hundred guineas." His pensions from the French court were not paid during his stay abroad. He was not present to call for the money, and under the *régime* of the period the claims of a pensioner in disgrace were not likely to receive attention at the treasury. Thus, at the age of thirty-two, for a proper and becoming retort to a black-guard's insult, he saw himself obliged to begin the world anew in a foreign land, the very language of which he knew scarcely anything of. To an ordinary traveler ignorance of the language of a foreign country is merely an inconvenience; but to this stranger language was the tool of his vocation, and he had deliberately forborne to acquire skill in the use of any other.

But he rose to the occasion. He put forth that peculiar energy, intense, well-directed, good-humored, sustained, which men exert who conquer the world, and remain victorious to the end. And, first of all, to get possession of the language of his new country. He studied English as though he expected to pass the rest of his days in England, and meant to try a career as an English author. His introduction to the Walpoles and his acquaintance with the Bolingbrokes opened to him the most interesting houses, political and literary; but it was not among the lords of the isle that he found the one helpful friend a stranger needs while he is struggling with a new language. Among the men of business whom he may have met at Greenwich Fair was Everard Falkener, silk and cloth merchant, afterwards Sir Everard Falkener, English ambassador at Constantinople. This gentleman, who was well versed in the classic languages, a collector of ancient coins and medals, and possessor of a good library, lived at Wandsworth, a pleasant village on the Thames, four or five miles above London, and not far from Richmond. In the hospitable manner of the time he took the stranger home, and kept him there a favored guest whenever he was not invited elsewhere. Everard Falkener's house at Wandsworth was, in fact, the home

of the exile during his stay in England; and these two remained friends and correspondents for thirty-five years after, or as long as both lived. The friendship was continued even to the next generation; for Voltaire lived to welcome under his own roof at Ferney two grown sons of Sir Everard Falkener, to sit between them at his own table, and tell them stories of the time when their father was a father to him in England. Curiously enough, he foretold the ambassadorship of Falkener. "I was a prophet once in my life," he wrote, in 1738, to Thieriot, "although not in my own country. It was in London, at our dear Falkener's house. He was only a merchant, and I predicted that he would be ambassador at the Porte. He laughed; but, behold, he is ambassador!"

The merchant, we may infer, was a contented, cheerful soul, without desire to be ambassador or baronet. Voltaire quotes, in his "Remarks upon Pascal," a few pleasant lines of a letter which he received from Falkener in 1728: "I am here just as you left me: neither merrier, nor sadder, nor richer, nor poorer; enjoying perfect health, having everything that renders life agreeable; without love, without avarice, without ambition, and without envy, — and as long as all that lasts I shall call myself a very happy man." This is a good kind of person for a stranger in a strange land to fall in with.

An inmate now of an English home, and a frequent guest at others, he was much surprised, it appears, at their plain furniture and meagre decoration. London, he afterwards wrote, was very far, in 1726, from being equal to Paris, either in splendor, in taste, in sumptuousness, in costly objects, in agreeableness, in the fine arts, or in the art of society. He declared that there were "five hundred times more silver plate in the houses of Paris *bourgeois* than in those of London." A Paris notary, solicitor, or draper, he said, was better lodged, better furnished, better served, than a magistrate of the first city of England; and Paris consumed in one day more poultry and game than London in a week. Paris, he thought, burned a thousand times more wax candles than London; for, except at the court end, London was lighted only with tallow.¹

Under Falkener's hospitable roof, with inmates eager to assist him, he improved rapidly in his English. We all under-

¹ 61 Œuvres de Voltaire, 403.

rate the obstacles in the way of making a conquest of another language, a feat so difficult as to approach impossibility, and few men have ever really done it since our race began to articulate. It is probably true, as a writer has recently asserted, that not more than three educated men are ever alive at the same time who know a foreign tongue as well as they know their own. Voltaire evidently meant to be one. English, he would say, was "a learned language," and deserved to be studied as such. The reader shall see for himself what progress he made. He landed on English soil in May, 1726; and we have three English letters of his written within the first nine months of his stay. Unfortunately, the least correct one comes to us without date, but we may suppose it written in the summer of 1726. It was copied from the original manuscript without change. The John Brinsden, to whom it was addressed, appears to have been a wine merchant, and to have had relations with Lord Bolingbroke.

"Sir, — j wish you good health, a quick sale of y^r burgundy, much latin, and greeke to one of y^r children, much Law, much of cooke and littleton, to the other. quiet and joy to mistress brinsden, money to all. when you'll drink y^r burgundy with mr furneze, pray tell him j'll never forget his favours.

"But dear john be so kind as to let me know how does my lady Bolingbroke, as to my lord j left him so well j dont doubt he is so still. but j am very uneasie about my lady. If she might have as much health as she has spirit & witt, Sure she would be the Strongest body in england. Pray dear s^r write me Something of her, of my lord, and of you. direct y^r letter by the penny post at m^r Cavalier, Belitery square by the R Exchange. j am sincerely & heartily y^r most humble most obedieut rambling friend
VOLTAIRE.

"john Brinsden, esq.
durham's yard
by charing cross." ¹

This being about such a letter as he would be equal to after two or three months of English study, we may presume that it was written before he returned to France in search of his chevalier. Our next specimen is dated in November; but probably its mere verbal correctness is due to the English editor who

¹ Notes and Queries, 1868. "I transcribe [says a correspondent of Notes and Queries] the following letter from the Bazar, or Literary and Scientific Repository, 4to, 1824, an obscure and forgotten periodical published in Birmingham."

first gave it to the public. It is a note addressed to Alexander Pope, after his overturn in Lord Bolingbroke's great six-horse coach, near Dawly, in Shropshire. The accident happened in crossing a bridge, and Pope was thrown into the stream.

"SIR:—I hear this moment of your sad adventure: the water you fell into was not Hippocrene's water; otherwise it would have supported you: indeed, I am concerned beyond expression for the danger you have been in, and more for your wounds. Is it possible, that those fingers which have written 'The Rape of the Lock,' the 'Criticism,' and which have so becomingly dressed Homer in an English coat, should have been so barbarously treated? Let the hand of Dennis or of your poetasters be cut off, — yours is sacred. I hope, sir, you are now perfectly recovered. Really, your accident concerns me as much as all the disasters of a master ought to affect his scholar. I am sincerely, sir, with the admiration which you deserve,

"Your most humble servant,

"VOLTAIRE.

"In my Lord Bolingbroke's House,
Friday, at noon, Nov. 16, 1726."

Our third specimen is a familiar letter, written in March, 1727, to Thieriot, who had asked him to find some books in London; as Thieriot, too, was deep in English studies, and desired to get a popular English book to translate into French. Voltaire began his letter in French, telling him that the parcel of books was on its way to Calais, whence it would be conveyed by coach to Paris. Then he broke into English in the manner following:—

"It was indeed a very hard task formed to find that damned book which, under the title of 'Improvement of Human Reason' [a translation from the Arabic], is an example of nonsense from one end to the other, and which besides is a tedious nonsense, and consequently very distasteful to the French nation, that detests madness itself, when madness is languishing and flat. The book is scarce, because it is bad, it being the fate of all wretched books never to be printed again. So I spent almost a fortnight in the search of it, till at last I had the misfortune to find it.

"I hope you will not read it throughout, that spiritless nonsense romance, though indeed you deserve to read it, to do penance for the trouble you gave me to inquire after it, for the tiresome perusal I made of some parts of this whimsical, stupid performance, and for

your credulity in believing those who gave you so great an idea of so mean a thing.

“You will find in the same parcel the second volume of M. Gulliver, which (by the by I don't advise you to translate) strikes at the first; the other is overstrained. The reader's imagination is pleased and charmingly entertained by the new prospect of the lands which Gulliver discovers to him; but that continued series of new fangles, of follies, of fairy tales, of wild inventions, pall at last upon our taste. Nothing unnatural may please long: it is for this reason that commonly the second parts of romances are so insipid. Farewell; my services to those who remember me; but I hope I am quite forgot here [there?].”¹

There are sentences in this letter which show the beginning of facility in English. “The book is scarce because it is bad, it being the fate of all wretched books never to be printed again,” is a good English sentence, besides containing a valuable hint for the collectors of antiquated trash. The remark, however, did not apply to the work in question, which was printed several times, — once in Latin, and twice at least in English. Later in 1727, when, perhaps, he had studied English a little more than a year, he wrote a few lines of English verse, which show considerable command of the language: —

TO LAURA HARLEY.

Laura, would you know the passion
 You have kindled in my breast?
 Trifling is the inclination
 That by words can be expressed.
 In my silence see the lover;
 True love is by silence known;
 In my eyes you 'll best discover
 All the power of your own.

This Laura Harley was the wife of an English merchant, who obtained a divorce from her, and mentioned these lines in his petition as one of the evidences of his right to a divorce. They were, probably, on the part of Voltaire, a mere exercise in English, the husband's complaint being against “two other seducers of his wife.”²

From these examples we may conclude that, early in his

¹ Lettres Inédites de Voltaire, page 35.

² Les Divorces Anglais, par Châteauneuf, Paris, 1821. Quoted in 18 Œuvres de Voltaire, 240.

residence in England, he was able to take part in conversation and to read the authors with whom he associated. He continued to work hard in the language, and began to write in it for the public eye before he had been eighteen months in England. We have about thirty letters of his written in English, many of them to Falkener, and some after he had been absent twenty years from England. These letters show that he was one of those foreigners who could have made English entirely his own, and that he did actually make great progress towards it. All his life he was fond of throwing bits of English into his conversation and letters, and took pleasure in speaking the language when he was a very old man, past eighty. To that very Franklin who was then setting type in a London printing-house, a journeyman of nineteen, he spoke English, when they met in Paris, fifty-two years after.

CHAPTER XXII.

RESIDENCE IN ENGLAND.

HE appears to have known almost every person of note in England. "Old Horace Walpole's" letter of recommendation made him free of the great whig houses and circles. Writing, forty-one years later, to Horace Walpole, of Strawberry Hill, nephew to "Old Horace," and son of Sir Robert, he said, "Perhaps I am unknown to you, although I was once honored with the friendship of the Two Brothers."¹ So the Walpoles were often styeled at the time when one of them was supreme in home politics, and the other well skilled in those of Continental courts. The conspicuous whig house then was the new seat of Bubb Dodington in Dorsetshire, where authors and artists were among the frequent and most welcome guests, and where also the Two Brothers or their colleagues were occasionally to be met. Voltaire was soon a familiar guest at this magnificent abode.

Edward Young, who had not yet written the "Night Thoughts," nor even taken orders, though forty-six years of age, was often there in those years. He was at this period a poet and dramatist of great celebrity, known to the London public chiefly as the author of the hideous and popular tragedy of "The Revenge," a play that afforded fine howling to the tragedians of two generations. Oddly enough, Voltaire, future author of "La Pucelle," and Young, of the "Night Thoughts," became and long remained very good friends, discoursing much together at Dodington's on matters literary. On one occasion, as Spence records, the conversation turned upon the dialogue in "Paradise Lost" (Book X.) between Sin and Death, beginning, —

"Within the gates of hell sat Sin and Death,
In counterview within the gates, that now

¹ Voltaire à Ferney, page 410.

lching outrageous flame
 rar into Chaos, since the fiend passed through,
 Sin opening ; who thus now to Death began :
 ' O son, why sit we here each other viewing ? '

Voltaire, with vehemence, objected to the personification of Sin and Death. The reader has only to glance at the passage in Milton, and then think of Voltaire's reading it before he was at all equal to such English as that, and he will feel how absurd it must have seemed to him. Young replied by the well-known epigram, of which the best version is given by Dr. Johnson :—

" ' You are so witty, profligate, and thin,
 At once we think you Milton, Death, and Sin.' " ¹

This happy stroke, it appears, softened the severity of the French critic. Young remembered the incident when, many years later, he dedicated his " Sea Piece " " to Mr. Voltaire."

" ' Tell me, ' say'st thou, ' who courts my smile ?
 What stranger strayed from yonder isle ? '
 No stranger, sir, though born in foreign climes ;
 On Dorset Downs, where Milton's page
 With Sin and Death provoked thy rage,
 Thy rage provoked, who soothed with gentle rhymes ;
 Who kindly conched thy censure's eye,
 And gave thee clearly to descry
 Sound judgment giving law to fancy strong ;
 Who half inclined thee to confess,
 Nor could thy modesty do less,
 That Milton's blindness lay not in his song.
 But such debates long since are flown,
 Forever set the suns that shone
 On airy pastimes ere our brows were gray ;
 How shortly shall we both forget,
 To thee, my patron, I my debt,
 And thou to thine, for Prussia's golden key."

These lines, written not less than a quarter of a century after the conversation upon Milton, show us, at least, that it made a lively impression upon the mind of the English poet. Another poet, often a guest of Dodington's, may have taken part in it, — Thomson, whose " Winter " was then in its first popularity. He sold the manuscript for three guineas in 1726, saw the third edition before the year was out, and was now bringing forward the other " Seasons." Voltaire mentions having known him in England, and speaks slightly of his poetry.

¹ 2 Lives of the Poets, 529. N. Y. edition, 1861.

Swift was then at the summit of his career; for in 1724 he gave Ireland the "Drapier Letters," and in 1726 he published the first part of "Gulliver's Travels." He was much in England during Voltaire's stay, and the French poet became familiar with him. When Swift visited France, in 1727, he carried a letter of introduction from Voltaire to Count de Morville, the French minister for foreign affairs. "I believe," wrote Voltaire in this epistle, "that you will not be sorry to dine with M. Swift and President Hénault; and I flatter myself that you will regard as a proof of my sincere attachment to your person the liberty I take in presenting to you one of the most extraordinary men that England has produced, and the most capable of feeling all the extent of your great qualities."

The dramatist Congreve, long retired from active life on munificent pensions and sinecures, was another of Voltaire's English acquaintances. "He was infirm and almost dying," the exile records, "when I knew him. He had one fault, — that of not sufficiently esteeming his first trade of author, which had made his fame and fortune. He spoke to me of his works as trifles beneath him, and told me, at our first conversation, to visit him only on the footing of a gentleman who lived very simply. I replied that if he had had the misfortune to be only a gentleman like another, I should never have come to see him; and I was shocked at a vanity so ill placed." It may have been through Congreve that Voltaire became so intimate with the valiant old Duchess of Marlborough, to whom, rich as she was, Congreve left his fortune. The duchess gave him several choice morsels of information, which he used with effect in later historical works. She even told him the amount of her revenue as widow, namely, seventy thousand pounds sterling. The duchess, he says, was convinced that Queen Anne, late in her reign, had had a secret interview in England with her brother, James II., and assured him that if he would renounce the Roman religion, "which the English regard as the mother of tyranny," she would designate him as her successor.¹ Several of the old officers of the Duke of Marlborough supplied him with information relating to the long contest with Louis XIV., which he kept

¹ Siècle de Louis XIV., chapter xxiv.

safe in his memory or note-book for many a year, until the moment came for them to fall into their places.

He speaks also of having known Bishop Berkeley, the Bishop of Rochester, John Byng, afterwards admiral, and Gay, the author of the "Beggars' Opera." He may have witnessed the first performance of Gay's work in 1727, the great hit of that year, — a success that drew the town away from Handel's operas, and spoiled his season. He knew Sir Hans Sloane, president, after Newton's death, of the Royal Society. Sir Isaac Newton he just missed; for Sir Isaac died in March, 1727, before Voltaire had been a year in the country.

— Of all the events that occurred in England during his residence there, the one that appears to have made the deepest impression upon his mind was the burial of Sir Isaac Newton. He was in London on the 28th of March, when the remains of the philosopher lay in state in the Jerusalem Chamber, and statesmen, nobles, and philosophers gathered there to pay the last homage to a man whose sole claim to distinction was that he had enlarged the boundaries of human knowledge. When the body was carried to its last resting-place in Westminster Abbey, the pall was borne by the lord chancellor, the highest official in the kingdom, by the Duke of Montrose and the Duke of Roxburgh, by the Earls of Pembroke, Sussex, and Macclesfield, — members of the Royal Society, of which Newton had been president for nearly a quarter of a century. The funeral was attended by a concourse of the men highest in rank and greatest in name in England, and its solemn pageantry was witnessed by a multitude of citizens who understood little, it is true, of what Newton had done for them and their posterity, but who felt, in some degree, how becoming it was in men great by accident to pay such honors to a man great by nature.

There were two poets upon whom this scene, so honorable to England and to human nature, made a profound impression. One of these was Thomson. In his poem upon the death of Newton, he expresses the feeling that in honoring *him* England redeemed herself: —

"For, though depraved and sunk, she brought thee forth,
And glories in thy name; she points thee out
To all her sons, and bids them eye thy star,
While, in expectance of the second life,

When time shall be no more, thy sacred dust
Sleeps with her kings, and dignifies the scene."

What a lasting impression was made upon Voltaire's susceptible mind by Newton's stately funeral the numerous allusions to it in his letters attest. In extreme old age, his eye would kindle and his countenance light up when he spoke of his once having lived in a land where a professor of mathematics, only because he was great in his vocation, could be buried in a temple where the ashes of kings reposed, and the highest subjects in the kingdom felt it an honor to assist in bearing thither his body.

He was curious to know something more of Newton than he could learn from the ordinary sources of information. In his later writings he alludes several times to his having known in England Mrs. Conduit, Sir Isaac's niece. From her lips he heard the apple story, and to him, as it seems, the world owes the preservation of that most interesting of anecdotes. "One day in the year 1666, Newton, then retired to the country, seeing some fruit fall from a tree, as I was told by his niece, Madame Conduit, fell into a profound meditation upon the cause which draws all bodies in a line which, if prolonged, would pass very nearly through the centre of the earth."¹ He preserves on the same page another anecdote of Newton, perhaps derived from the same source: "A stranger asked Newton, one day, how he had discovered the laws of the universe. 'By thinking of them without ceasing,' was the philosopher's reply." I wonder if he heard from Madame Conduit the Newton anecdote related in the "Philosophical Dictionary:" "In my youth I believed that Newton had made his fortune by his extreme merit. I imagined that the court and city of London had named him by acclamation Master of the Mint. Not at all. Isaac Newton had a niece, sufficiently amiable, named Madame Conduit, who was very pleasing to the chancellor of the exchequer, Halifax. Infinitesimal calculus and gravitation would have availed nothing without a pretty niece."

Newton's study of the prophecies amazed, puzzled, and even saddened this studious exile. How such mighty powers of mind could accommodate themselves to the mere consideration of

¹ Philosophie de Newton, par Voltaire, chapter iii.

such a subject was a baffling enigma to him. "What a poor species the human race," he exclaims, "if the great Newton believed he had found in the Apocalypse the present history of Europe!" Elsewhere he adds the famous sentence, "Apparently, Newton wished by that commentary upon the Apocalypse to console the human race for the superiority he had over it."¹

Of the authors whom Voltaire met and studied in England, the one who influenced his own writings most was, beyond question, Alexander Pope. The friendship of Bolingbroke brought him at once into cordial relations with the circle of which that nobleman was the idol and Pope the ornament. The affection entertained for Bolingbroke by literary men was as remarkable as the detestation in which he was held by some of his political associates. Pope paid him the most stupendous compliment, perhaps, that one mortal ever bestowed upon another. "I really think," said Pope, "that there is something in that great man which looks as if he were placed here by mistake. When the comet appeared to us, a month or two ago, I had sometimes an imagination that it might possibly have come to our world to carry him away, as a coach comes to one's door for other visitors." And when Pope was dying Bolingbroke hung sobbing over his chair, and said, "I have known him these thirty years, and value myself more upon that man's love than" — His voice failed him, and he could utter no more. Voltaire was fond of both these brilliant men. In one of his poetical epistles, published in 1726, he speaks of Bolingbroke as one who possessed the eloquence of Cicero, the intrepidity of Cato, the wit of Mæcenas, and the agreeableness of Petronius. He loved him living, and he defended him dead. He relates, however, but one trifling anecdote of his intercourse with Lord Bolingbroke. The conversation turning one day upon the alleged avarice of the Duke of Marlborough, some one appealed to Bolingbroke to confirm the allegation, and with the more confidence because Bolingbroke had been of the party opposed to Marlborough. His reply was, "He was so great a man that I have forgotten his faults."

➤ Pope's mastery of the art of rhyming would have sufficed to attract the regard of a man who had written only in rhyme,

¹ 7 Dictionnaire Philosophique, 172.

and who thought that there was no true poetry without rhyme. It appears that upon this vexed question of rhyme Pope and Voltaire were of the same opinion. He tells us that he asked Pope, one day, why Milton had not written "Paradise Lost" in rhyme. "Because he could not," answered Pope. This does not accord with the experience of Pope's successor in Homeric translation. Cowper says that to rhyme in English demands "no great exercise of ingenuity;" and that he has frequently written more lines in a day "with tags to them" than he ever could without. Voltaire and Pope were in accord upon subjects of more importance than the construction of poems. The vein of moralizing that runs through many of Pope's productions was peculiarly pleasing to Voltaire, who constantly insists that a poem should do something more than amuse. Pope had not yet written the "Essay on Man," nor the "Universal Prayer;" but his conversation was much in the spirit of those works, which Voltaire regarded as among the choicest master-pieces of English literature, and which by and by he caused to be translated into French.

The religious tone that prevailed in the circles of Pope and Bolingbroke could not have differed materially from that to which the stranger was accustomed in France. Educated men of the world in both countries were very likely to be deists. But in France no man then dared print deism in the vulgar tongue, and no moral teaching was allowed which did not appear to concede the claims of the church. The great dictionary, or cyclopædia, of Pierre Bayle, published originally in 1696, and enlarged to four volumes in 1720, is indeed full of that which makes men doubt and deny. Voltaire was familiar with the work from boyhood, as were all the reading men and thinking men of that generation in France. But not only was Bayle obliged to publish his work at distant Rotterdam, but in treating all the delicate topics he was compelled to use the utmost caution and management, veiling his obvious incredulity under forms and professions of respect. Glance over the article upon Spinoza, for example. Including the notes, which are much more voluminous than the text, we may say of this article that it suggests and indicates the whole struggle of the human mind with the problem of the universe. The opinions and conjectures of the ancients, the beliefs, de-

nials, and differences of the moderns, are all sketched or stated; pantheism, atheism, and deism are described or defined; and the reader is assisted, nay, compelled, to survey the stupendous and ever-fascinating theme from a height above the belfry of the parish church. But the parish church is, as the French say, "managed" from first to last. No pretext is given to the censor or the inquisitor. Take one specimen: "People who associated with Spinoza, and the peasants of the villages where he lived for some time in seclusion, agree in saying that he was a man of good habits, affable, honest, obliging, and of strict morality. *That is strange*; but, really, it is not more astonishing than to see people living very badly, though they have a full persuasion of the gospel." To this passage profuse notes are appended, exalting still higher the pure and noble character of Spinoza. There is scarcely an important article in all the four ponderous volumes of Bayle that does not hint or insinuate similar dissent from the enforced way of thinking.

But in England, as the exile observed, the deists were not obliged to insinuate. Deism, long in vogue in the "great world," was now becoming popular among portions of the people, and printed its thought with very little reserve or "management." And yet the movement had begun at Paris. One hundred and two years before Voltaire saw England, Lord Herbert, English ambassador at Paris, after getting, as he supposed, a revelation from Heaven, published his treatise against revelation, "*De Veritate*," copies of which he sent to the learned of all Europe, and thus began deism. His five points were: (1.) There is a God. (2.) Man should worship him. (3.) The practice of virtue is the chief part of worship. (4.) Faults are expiated by repentance. (5.) There must be a future of reward and punishment. The ambassador covered his heresies with the safe and decent mantle of the Latin language; and so did some of his successors.

But deism was now getting into language which could be called vulgar in more senses than one. After Herbert, Hobbes, and Shaftsbury, came Toland, Collins, Tindal, and others, each bolder than the last, until, in 1727, under the eyes of this French exile, all former audacities were eclipsed by Woolston in his "*Six Discourses on the Miracles*." This writer, a Cam-

bridge master of arts, put into coarse, uncompromising English what many deists were accustomed to utter in conversation every time two or three of them found themselves together. He affected to believe that the miracles must be interpreted as allegories, because, if taken literally, they were too absurd for serious consideration. He proceeded to comment upon each miracle in turn with a freedom never before seen in print, but also with the crude and boisterous humor that pleased Londoners when Hogarth was an apprentice. He said, for example, that the wine miraculously made at the wedding feast for guests already drunk must have been punch, and that the whole story was so monstrous that no one not brutalized by superstition could believe it. This specimen will suffice. Since that day, the reading world has been familiarized with this mode of treating such subjects, and has discovered how inoperative it is when both writers and writing are let alone. It was a startling novelty in 1727. Woolston advertised that he would sell his discourses at his own house, and buyers came thither in great numbers. Voltaire states that thirty thousand copies were sold during the last two years of his stay in England; and no one then molested the author. The Bishop of London wrote five pastoral letters warning his flock against these essays, and at length caused Woolston to be prosecuted. He was sentenced to a year's imprisonment and to a fine of a hundred pounds. Refusing to give bonds not to repeat his offense, he was obliged to pass the brief remainder of his life within "the bounds" of King's Bench prison.

The lightness of Woolston's sentence and the length of time that elapsed before he was prosecuted indicate the hold which deism had upon the public. Voltaire saw it prevalent in the houses of noblemen and poets, and Woolston's career showed him that it had made its way among the multitude in the shop and the street. There were clubs of deists in London, which held weekly meetings in ale-houses, and reconstructed the universe over pots of beer. Young Franklin composed his pamphlet in 1725 upon "Liberty and Necessity," designed to refute Wollaston's "Religion of Nature," which he had assisted to set in type. He carried negation in this work far beyond deism, — even beyond atheism, if that is possible; denying equally the existence of

good and the existence of evil, and asserting that in every state and stage of conceivable existence pleasure and pain are and must be equal in quantity.¹ His companions were not shocked, it appears, at these bold speculations; and, so far as we can discern, such entire freedom from the traditional and the legendary was held in esteem among the workingmen of London.

None of these things escaped the observation of the exile, abundant in labors as he was. To him England was a university. Few strangers have ever extracted more in two years and a half from a foreign country than he from England; although, during his residence there, he performed much work that remains readable, and is constantly read, to the present hour. Note the catalogue of his studies and labors. First, the partial acquisition of the "learned language," which involved a wide survey of its literature, and a study of many authors, — Newton, Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden, Locke, Bacon, Swift, Pope, Addison, the later dramatists, and many others. It was no easy task for a Frenchman of that age to so much as forgive Shakespeare for not being Racine, and Voltaire could never quite succeed in it. We can trace his struggles with the author of "Macbeth" and "Hamlet."

"Shakespeare [he remarks], the first tragic poet of the English, is rarely spoken of in England except as divine. In London I never saw the theatre as full to witness 'L'Andromaque' of Racine, well translated as it is by Philips, or Addison's 'Cato,' as when the ancient pieces of Shakespeare were performed. These pieces are monsters in tragedy. There are some plays the action of which lasts several years; the hero, baptized in the first act, dies of old age in the fifth. You see upon the stage wizards, peasants, drunkards, buffoons, grave-diggers digging a grave, who sing drinking songs while playing with skulls. In a word, imagine what you can of most monstrous and most absurd, you will find it in Shakespeare. When I began to learn the English language, I could not understand how so enlightened a nation as the English could admire so extravagant an author; but when I knew the language better, I perceived that the English were right, and that it is impossible for a whole nation to be deceived in a matter of sentiment, and mistaken as to their being pleased. They saw, as I saw, the crudities of their favorite author, but they felt his beauties better than

¹ For a copy of this pamphlet see Parton's *Life of Franklin*, vol. i. p. 607.

I could, — beauties so much the more remarkable from their having flashed out in the midst of profoundest night. He has enjoyed his reputation for a hundred and fifty years. The authors who came after him have served to augment rather than diminish it. The great understanding of the author of ‘Cato,’ and his talents, which made him a secretary of state, did not give him a place by the side of Shakespeare. Such is the privilege of genius: it makes for itself a path where no one went before; it pursues its course without guide, without art, without rule; it goes astray in its career, but it leaves far behind all excellence that is merely reasonable and correct. Such was Homer: he created his art and left it imperfect; his works a chaos, where on all sides the light shines.”¹

Shakespeare, by turns, enraptured and repelled him. Returning from the theatre, one evening, after seeing with a delight he never forgot the “Julius Cæsar” of Shakespeare, he began to write a tragedy of Brutus in English prose. He continued the exercise until he had composed the first act very nearly as he afterwards executed it in French rhyme. Lord Bolingbroke, who, he says, gave him lessons in *French*, as well as in English, approved the plan, and the work was published before he left England.

During the whole year 1727 he was full of business, his most immediate scheme being the issue of the London edition of “La Henriade” by subscription. He was preparing, also, to write a book upon England, and was already at work upon his “History of Charles XII.,” the material for which had been accumulating for some years, and had gained important accessions in London. To promote all these objects he now appeared as an English author. In a London monthly for December, 1727, I read the announcement of his work: —

“An Essay upon the Civil Wars of France, extracted from Curious M. S. And also upon the Epick Poetry of the European nations, from Homer down to Milton. By Arouet de Voltaire. London. Printed by Samuel Fallason in Prujean’s Court, Old Bailey, and sold by the Booksellers of London and Westminster. 1727. In 8vo. pagg. 130.”

The editor of the magazine merely adds a line of comment: “These two essays deserve to be read by all the curious.” Among the literary curiosities in the British Museum is Sir

¹ Essai sur la Poësie Epique, chapter ii.

Hans Sloane's copy of the first edition of this work, kept in a glass case under lock and key. It is printed in large, clear, open type, a handsome book, and bears upon the upper part of the title-page, in the right-hand corner, the following words in Voltaire's own hand : —

*To Sr hanslone
from his most
humble servant
voltaire.*

The volume opens with an "Advertisement to the Reader," printed in italics, which reads thus : —

"It has the appearance of too great presumption in a Traveller who hath been but eighteen months in England, to attempt to write in a Language which he cannot pronounce at all, and which he hardly understands in Conversation. But I have done what we do every Day at School, where we write Latin and Greek, tho' surely we pronounce both very pitifully, and should understand neither of them if they were uttered to us with the right Roman or Greek pronunciation.

"I look upon the English Language as a learned one, which deserves to be the object of our Application in France, as the French tongue is thought a kind of Accomplishment in England.

"Besides I did not learn English for my private satisfaction and improvement only, but out of a kind of Duty.

"I am ordered to give an Account of my Journey into England. Such an Undertaking can no more be attempted without understanding the Language than a Scheme of Astronomy could be laid without the help of Mathematicks. And I have not a mind to imitate the late Mr Sorbières, who having stayed three months in this Country, without knowing anything either of its manners or of its language, thought fit to print a relation which proved but a dull, scurrilous Satire upon a Nation he knew nothing of.

"Our European travellers, for the most part, are satirical upon their neighbouring Countries, and bestow large Praises upon the Persians and Chinese ; it being too natural to revile those who stand in Competition with us ; and to extol those, who being far remote from us, are out of the reach of Envy.

"The true aim of a Relation is to instruct Men, not to gratify their Malice. We should be busied chiefly in giving faithful Accounts of all the useful Things, and of the extraordinary Persons ; whom to know, and to imitate would be a Benefit to our Countrymen. A Traveller who writes in that Spirit is a Merchant of a nobler kind,

who Imports into his native Country the Arts and Virtues of other Nations.

“I will leave to others the Care of describing with Accuracy Paul’s Church, the Monument, Westminster, Stonehenge, etc. I consider England in another view; it strikes my Eyes, as it is the Land which hath produced a Newton, a Locke, a Tillotson, a Milton, a Boyle; and many great Men, either dead or alive, whose Glory in War, in State-Affairs, or in Letters, will not be confined to the Bounds of this Island.

“Whoever had the Honour and Happiness to be acquainted with any of them, and will do me the favour to let me know some notable (tho’ perhaps not enough known) Passages of their Lives, will confer an Obligation, not only upon me, but upon the Publick.

“Likewise if there are any new Inventions or Undertakings which have obtained or deserved Success, I shall be obliged to those who will be so kind as to give me any Information of that Nature: and shall either quote my Authors or observe a religious Silence, according as they think proper.

“As to this present Essay, it is intended as a kind of Preface or Introduction to the *Henriade*; the Octavo Edition whereof is sold by N. Prevost; as also the French Tragedy of *Brutus*.”

The volume attracted much attention, and reached a fourth edition. The “*Essay upon Epic Poetry*” is agreeable and suggestive reading even at this day. The passage upon Shakespeare, quoted above from the French translation, gives an idea of its manner. The library of the British Museum contains a copy of the fourth edition of the work, published in 1731, corrected by the author: “to which is prefixed ‘a discourse on tragedy, with reflections on the English and French drama.’ Bound with this copy is a critical pamphlet of eighty-one pages, entitled, ‘*Remarks on M. Voltaire’s Essay upon Epick Poetry, by Paul Rolli. London, 1728,*’” in which Milton is defended against Voltaire’s censure. In the “*Discourse on Tragedy,*” Voltaire addresses Lord Bolingbroke: —

“Your Lordship knows that the tragedy of *Brutus* was struck off in Great Britain. You may remember that whilst I was in Wandsworth, with my excellent friend, Mr. Faulkner, I amused myself with writing the first act of the following tragedy in English prose, which I have since worked up in French verse, with little alteration. I used to mention it to you sometimes, and we both wondered that no English poet had yet attempted to raise a tragedy upon this subject,

which, of all others, is perhaps adapted to the English stage. Your Lordship prompted me to finish a dramatic piece susceptible of such exalted sentiments.

“Permit me, therefore, to present you with *Brutus*, though written in French.

“At my return from England, when I had closely studied the English language for two years put together, ’t was with some diffidence that I attempted to write a tragedy in French. I had almost accustomed myself to think in English, and I found that the expressions of my own tongue were not now so familiar to me; ’t was like a river whose course having been diverted, both time and pains were required to bring it back to its own bed.”

The *Essays* promoted, doubtless, the subscriptions to “*La Henriade*.” What, indeed, could have advertised it better? The English quarto edition of that poem, announced in 1726, price one guinea, was not ready till 1728, and during the interval the author lent his personal energy and tact to the work of getting subscriptions, not disdaining to solicit literary friends to hand the proposals about their circle. The copperplates engraved in Paris, and used in the Rouen edition, were made to do duty a second time. The volume was a handsome, gilt-edged quarto, of 202 pages, in large type, with ample margin, and but twenty-two lines on a page. It was announced as “the first edition published with the author’s sanction.” Queen Caroline, who came to the throne in June, 1727, with her husband, George II., was then one of the most popular princesses in Europe, and to her Voltaire rededicated his poem. As Princess of Wales, she had been much the friend of Sir Isaac Newton, a fact of which the author of the dedication was doubtless aware.

“TO THE QUEEN.

“MADAM:—It was the fate of Henry the Fourth to be protected by an English queen. He was assisted by the great Elizabeth, who was in her age the glory of her sex. By whom can his memory be so well protected as by her who resembles so much Elizabeth in her personal virtues?

“Your Majesty will find in this book bold, impartial truths; morality unstained with superstition; a spirit of liberty, equally abhorrent of rebellion and of tyranny; the rights of kings always asserted, and those of mankind never laid aside.

“The same spirit in which it is written gave me the confidence to offer it to the virtuous consort of a king who, among so many crowned heads, enjoys almost the inestimable honor of ruling a free nation; a king who makes his power consist in being beloved, and his glory in being just.

“Our Descartes, who was the greatest philosopher in Europe before Sir Isaac Newton appeared, dedicated his ‘Principles’ to the celebrated Princess Palatine Elizabeth; not, said he, because she was a princess (for true philosophers respect princes, and never flatter them); but because of all his readers she understood him the best, and loved truth the most.

“I beg leave, Madam (without comparing myself to Descartes) to dedicate ‘The Henriade’ to your Majesty upon the like account, not only as the protectress of all arts and sciences, but as the best judge of them.

“I am, with that profound respect which is due to the greatest virtue as well as the highest rank, may it please your Majesty, your Majesty’s most humble, most dutiful, and most obliged servant,

“VOLTAIRE.”

The volume had all the success possible to a work written in a foreign language. The number of guinea subscribers was probably about fifteen hundred, and three octavo editions of the poem were also sold by booksellers about as fast as the books could be made. Eighty copies were subscribed for in France, where, it is to be hoped, the degenerate Sully perceived that the name of his great ancestor was taken out of the poem. The queen courteously acknowledged the honor paid her in the dedication, and King George II., as the custom was, sent the author a present of two thousand crowns. Voltaire himself mentions this pleasing event, but without telling us the value of the coins (*écus*), so named. If he meant English crowns, the present was the liberal one of five hundred pounds sterling. The fibbing Goldsmith declares that Queen Caroline sent the French poet two hundred pounds and her portrait. The Queen of Prussia, then in full intrigue to marry her daughter to the Prince of Wales, and her son, Frederic, to an English princess, sent Voltaire a medal bearing, as it seems, the Queen of England’s portrait. In his letter of acknowledgment to the Prussian minister, he says he shall keep the medal all his life, because it came to him from so great a queen, and because it represented the Queen of England, who, by her vir-

tues and great qualities called to mind the Queen of Prussia. Prince Frederic of Prussia was then a lad of sixteen, and in favor with his mother. Probably he read this letter, as well as the volume that went with it. He may have noticed the concluding sentence of the letter: "The noblest recompense of my labor is to find favor with such queens as yours, and to be valued by such readers as you; for, in matters of taste and science, it is not necessary to make any distinction between crowned heads and private persons."¹

The pecuniary result of this London "Henriade" has been usually overstated. M. Nicolardot, who has minutely investigated the subject, goes, perhaps, too far the other way, in estimating the whole profit of the two London editions of the poem at ten thousand francs.² I think it probable that the proceeds of the quarto edition, the octavo edition, the Essays preliminary, and "Brutus," with the gifts of king and queen, may have reached two thousand pounds sterling. It was a large sum for a man who spent little, and was well skilled in the art of investing money. During his stay in England Pope gained six thousand pounds by his translation of Homer, and Gay three thousand by his "Beggars' Opera;" but Dryden only received, as Pope said, twelve hundred pounds for his "Virgil," sixpence a line for his "Fables," ten "broad pieces" for a play, and fifty more for the acting. Thomson's "Spring" brought the author fifty guineas; Young's "Night Thoughts," two hundred and fifty; and Akenside's "Pleasures of the Imagination," one hundred and twenty. This stranger, therefore, may be considered to have done very well to get so much for the reprint of a poem in a foreign language. And during his residence of nearly three years, how much did he spend? Perhaps a hundred and fifty pounds, in all, while his revenues from France, without reckoning his suspended pensions, could not have been less than two hundred and fifty pounds a year.

He labored without pause. His "Charles XII." grew under his hands. His work upon England was in preparation, for it was never the way of this indefatigable spirit to finish one piece of work before beginning another. Of all his writings

¹ Voltaire à Ferney, page 312.

² Ménage et Finances de Voltaire, page 40.

the one most influential upon French minds was his Letters upon England; for they revealed to France the bewitching spectacle of a free country, and renewed the fascinating tradition of republican Rome learned at school. Lafayette records that it was reading these "Lettres Philosophiques," as they were entitled, that made him a republican at nine; and J. J. Rousseau attributes in great part to them the awakening of his late-maturing intelligence. It was a little book, almost forgotten now, merely a traveler's brief and pleasant chat respecting things and men of a foreign land. But the world is governed by a few little books. It is retarded and borne onward by little books. When the French Revolution shall be at length interpreted, in the first chapter of the work will be an account of this bright, incisive, saucy, artless, artful little book, which revealed free England to bound France. It led straight to '89. It was not necessary, as the wicked Heine remarks, for the censor to condemn this book; it would have been read without that.

Voltaire may have heard at Lord Bolingbroke's house the anecdote recorded by Spence of Robert Hooke, who said there were three reasons for preferring to live in England: The first was liberty, the second was liberty, and the third was liberty. Above all things else in England, this exile loved the freedom and toleration that prevailed there, "the noble liberty of thinking," to which he attributed whatever he found most excellent in English politics, science, and literature. To this freedom, also, he attributed the comparative exemption of England from religious antipathies. It was freedom, he thought, that enabled the numerous sects to live together in harmony. "Enter the London Exchange," he remarks, "a place more respectable than many courts. There you see the representatives of all nations assembled for a useful purpose. There the Jew, the Mahometan, and the Christian treat one another as if they were of the same religion, and give the name of infidel only to bankrupts. There the Presbyterian trusts the Anabaptist, and the Church-of-England man takes the word of a Quaker. On leaving this peaceful and free assembly, some go to the synagogue, others go to drink; this man proceeds to be baptized in a great tub in the name of the Father, the Son, and

the Holy Ghost; that man circumcises his son, and causes to be muttered over the child Hebrew words which are quite unintelligible to him; others go to their churches to await the inspiration of God with their hats on; all are content. If there was in England but one religion, its despotic sway were to be feared; if there were but two, they would cut one another's throats; but as there are thirty, they live in peace and are happy."

The Quakers, who were still a novelty in England to foreigners, attracted the particular attention of this most un-quakerlike of men. He knew his public, being himself a member of it, and he therefore gave four letters upon the Quakers. Believing, as he says, that the doctrines and history of so extraordinary a people merited the study of an intelligent man, he sought the society of one of the most famous Quakers in England, a retired merchant, who lived in a cottage near London, "well built, and adorned only with its own neatness." The curious stranger visited him in his retreat.

"The Quaker was an old man of fresh complexion, who had never been sick, because he always had been continent and temperate. In my life I have never seen a presence more noble nor more engaging than his. He was dressed, like all those of his persuasion, in a coat without plaits at the sides, or buttons on the pockets and sleeves, and wore a broad-brimmed hat like those of our ecclesiastics. He received me with his hat on, and advanced towards me without making the least inclination of his body; but there was more politeness in the open and humane expression of his countenance than there is in the custom of drawing one leg behind the other, and in that of carrying in the hand what was made to cover the head. 'Friend,' said he to me, 'I see that thou art a stranger; if I can be of any use to thee, thou hast only to speak.' 'Sir,' said I to him, with a bow and a step forward, according to our custom, 'I flatter myself that my reasonable curiosity will not displease you, and that you will be willing to do me the honor to instruct me in your religion.' 'The people of thy country,' he replied, 'make too many compliments and bows, but I have never before seen one of them who had the same curiosity as thou. Come in and take dinner with me.' I still kept paying him bad compliments, because a man cannot all at once lay aside his habits; and, after a wholesome and frugal repast, which began and ended

with a prayer to God, I began to question my host. I began with the question which good Catholics have put more than once to the Huguenots: 'My dear sir,' said I, 'have you been baptized?' 'No,' replied the Quaker, 'nor my brethren either.' 'How! *Morbleu!* You are not Christians, then?' 'My friend,' he mildly rejoined, 'swear not; we do not think that Christianity consists in sprinkling water upon the head with a little salt.' 'Heh, *bon Dieu!*' said I, shocked at this impiety; 'have you forgotten, then, that Jesus Christ was baptized by John?' 'Friend, once more, no oaths,' replied the benign Quaker. 'Christ received baptism from John; but he baptized no one; we are not John's disciples, but Christ's.' 'Ah,' cried I, 'how you would be burned by the Holy Inquisition. In the name of God, my dear man, let me have you baptized!' . . . 'Art thou circumcised?' he asked. I replied that I had not that honor. 'Very well, friend,' said he, 'thou art a Christian without being circumcised, and I without being baptized.'"

The conversation was continued to great length. In his report of it, Voltaire affects throughout the tone of the good Catholic, — Louis XV. being then King of France, and Cardinal de Fleury his prime minister. He adds that the benign Quaker conducted him, on the following Sunday, to a Quaker meeting, where he heard one of the brethren utter a long, nonsensical harangue, "half with his mouth, half with his nose," of which no one understood anything. He asked his friend why they permitted such silliness (*sottises*). The Quaker answered that they were obliged to endure it, because they could not know, when a man got up to speak, whether he was moved by the Spirit or by folly. The Quaker meeting appears to have effaced the good impressions of the sect which he had derived from his conversations with the retired merchant. Nevertheless, he proceeds to relate the history of the Quakers, and of William Penn. He concludes by remarking that the denomination, though flourishing in Pennsylvania, was on the decline in England, because the young Quakers, enriched by their fathers' industry, desired to enjoy the honors of public office, and to wear fashionable clothes, and to escape the reproach of belonging to a sect ridiculed by the world.

In his remarks upon the Church of England, Voltaire gives us a taste of his veritable self: "One can have no public em-

ployment in England, or Ireland, without being of the number of the faithful Anglicans; this reason, which is an excellent proof, has converted so many dissenters that to-day not a twentieth part of the nation is out of the pale of the Established Church." "The lower house of convocation formerly enjoyed some credit; at least, it had the privilege of meeting, of debating controverted points of doctrine, and of burning, now and then, some impious books, that is, books against themselves. The whig ministry, however, does not even permit those gentlemen to assemble, and they are reduced, in the obscurity of their parishes, to the mournful business of praying to God for a government which they would not be sorry to disturb." "The priests are almost all married. The awkwardness which they acquire at the universities, and the little acquaintance they have here with women, usually has the effect of obliging a bishop to be contented with his own wife. The priests go to the taverns sometimes, because custom permits it; and if they get drunk, it is in a serious way, and without scandal. . . . When they are told that in France young men, known by their debaucheries and raised to the rank of bishop by female intrigues, openly make love, amuse themselves by composing love songs, give every day costly and elaborate suppers, and go from those suppers to implore the illumination of the Holy Spirit, and boldly call themselves the successors of the Apostles, then they thank God that they are Protestants. Nevertheless, they are abominable heretics, fit to be burned by all the devils, as Rabelais says; and that is the reason why I do not meddle with their affairs."

Upon the government of England Voltaire descants in a graver strain. He failed not to inform his countrymen that in England no tax could be laid except with the consent of the king, lords, and commons, and that every man was assessed, not as in France according to his rank, or rather according to his want of rank, but according to his income. Nor did he omit to remark that in England the peasant's feet were not blistered by wooden shoes. "He eats white bread; he is well clad; he fears not to increase the number of his beasts, nor to cover his roof with tiles, lest he should have to pay a higher tax the next year. You see many peasants who have five or six hundred pounds sterling a year, and yet do not disdain to con-

tinue to cultivate the lands that have enriched them, and upon which they live as freemen." He observed with pleasure that the younger sons of noble families frequently entered into commerce, — a thing unheard of then in France. "I know not, however," he slyly remarks, "which is the more useful to a state, a well-powdered lord, who knows precisely at what hour the king gets up and goes to bed, and who gives himself airs upon playing the part of slave in a minister's ante-chamber, or a merchant who enriches his country, who from his counting-room sends orders to Surat and Cairo, and contributes to the happiness of mankind."

Of the philosophers of England, Locke and Newton were those whom he studied longest and admired most. He was one of the first of his countrymen who understood the discoveries of Newton, and it was he who made them popularly known to France. Locke he frequently styles the wisest of human beings, and the only man who had ever written worthily upon metaphysics. Lord Bacon, he thought, "knew not Nature, but he knew and pointed out all the paths that lead to a knowledge of her." "He despised, early in his career, that which fools in square caps taught under the name of philosophy, in those mad-houses called *colleges*; and he did all that he could to keep them from continuing to confuse the mind by their *nature abhorring a vacuum*, their *substantial forms*, and all those words which not only ignorance rendered respectable, but which a ridiculous blending with religion rendered sacred. He is the father of experimental philosophy." All of Voltaire's remarks upon Bacon, Locke, and Newton show that he felt the peculiar importance of each of them.

Shakespeare, as we have seen, he could not judge aright. He never could. Ducis, the first author who "adapted" Shakespeare to the French stage, was misled by Voltaire's estimate, as given in the Letters; and, indeed, it is only in our own time that France has come to the full possession and enjoyment of Shakespeare. For a century, Frenchmen generally accepted Voltaire's judgment. "Shakespeare," he told his countrymen, "created the English theatre. He had a genius full of force and fecundity, of nature and sublimity; but without the least spark of good taste, and without the slightest knowledge of the rules. I am going to say something bold,

but true: it is, that the merit of this author has ruined the English drama. There are such beautiful scenes, there are passages so grand and so terrible in those monstrous farces which they call tragedies, that his pieces have always been played with great success. Time, which alone gives reputation to men, renders at length their faults respectable. Most of the odd and gigantesque notions of this author have acquired, at the end of two hundred years, the right to pass for sublime. Modern authors have almost all copied them; but that which succeeded in Shakespeare is hissed in them." He proceeds to remark that England has produced but one tragedy worthy to be ranked with the master-pieces of the French stage, and that was Addison's "Cato." The writings of Voltaire contain, perhaps, a hundred allusions to Shakespeare, but most of them in this tone; and in almost the last piece he ever wrote, he still speaks of him as an inspired barbarian. In one of his essays, in 1761, after giving a ludicrous outline of "Hamlet," he enters into an inquiry how it could be that a nation which had produced the "Cato" of Addison could endure such crudities. This is his reason: "The chairmen, the sailors, the hackney-coachmen, the shopmen, the butchers, and even the clergy, in England, are passionately fond of shows. Give them cock-fights, bull-fights, gladiatorial combats, funerals, witchcraft, duels, hangings, ghosts, and they run in throngs to see them; and there is more than one lord as curious in these things as the populace. The people of London find in the tragedies of Shakespeare all that can please such a taste as this. The courtiers were obliged to follow the torrent."

Two or three considerations may lessen our astonishment at Voltaire's blindness to Shakespeare. One is that he spoke of Shakespeare very much as the great lights of English literature, from Dryden to Goldsmith, were accustomed to speak of him. Dryden styled "Troilus and Cressida" "a heap of rubbish." Dryden thought he had converted the "Tempest" into a tolerable play when he had spoiled it. Pope spoke of a forgotten play of the Earl of Dorset's as "written in a much purer style than Shakespeare's in his first plays." Bolingbroke, as Voltaire mentions, agreed with him upon the irregularities of Shakespeare. Goldsmith speaks of the "amazing, irregular beauties of Shakespeare." When George III. said

to Miss Burney that most of Shakespeare was "sad stuff," he probably expressed an opinion that prevailed in the higher circles of his time. There is reason to conclude that, when Voltaire's Letters upon the English appeared in London, his remarks upon Shakespeare were approved by the frequenters of such houses as those of Bolingbroke, Dodington, and Pope.

The customs of the French stage, in Voltaire's day, furnish some further explanation of his insensibility to Shakespeare. The tragic drama in France was a kind of drawing-room pastime, — decorous, artificial, high-flown. The common people attended the theatre only on festive days, when free admissions were given. To have introduced into a play the name of a prince of the reigning family would have been deemed a very great audacity. No author presumed to do it till Voltaire, emboldened, as he says, by Shakespeare's example, brought upon the scene characters famous in the history of France. At the same time, it was against the "rules" to present to the courtly audiences of that day peasants, mechanics, or any plebeian except a soldier, a *valet de chambre*, or a waiting-maid. No one could kill another on the stage. The only killing permitted was decorous and classical suicide. The entire action of the play was required to be exhibited in the same apartment, and in the space of time occupied in its representation. Subject to these rules, — subject, also, to the restraints of rhyme, — what could a French tragedy be but a series of stately dialogues? Accustomed to such a drama as this, Voltaire was shocked at scenes like those of the grave-diggers in "Hamlet," the fool in "Lear," the cobblers in "Julius Cæsar." When his "Tancrède" was performed, in 1760, the leading actress implored his consent to the erection of a scaffold upon the stage, draped in black. "My friend," he replied, "we must fight the English, not imitate their barbarous theatre. Let us study their philosophy; let us trample under our feet, as they do, infamous prejudices; let us drive out the Jesuits and wolves; let us no longer stupidly oppose inoculation and the attraction of gravitation; let us learn from them how to cultivate land; but let us beware of copying their savage drama." Moreover, his self-love was interested. If Shakespeare was right, Voltaire was wrong. If "Hamlet" was a good tragedy, what was "Œdipe"?

He succeeded little better with Milton. In many passages of his works he ridicules the "odd and extravagant conceptions" of that poet, to whose merit, however, he was not wholly insensible. "Paradise Lost," he concludes, "is a work more peculiar than natural, fuller of imagination than of grace, and of boldness than judgment; of which the subject is wholly ideal, and which seems not made for man." He admired the "majestic strokes with which Milton dared to depict God, and the character still more brilliant which he gives the Devil." The description of the Garden of Eden pleased him, as well as the "innocent loves of Adam and Eve." But when he comes to speak of the combats between the angels and the fallen spirits, of the mountains hurled upon each other, and of the great gathering of the devils in a hall, he can see in those passages only something barbaric and ludicrous. Milton, he remarks, was a bad prose-writer, and combated the apologists of King Charles as a ferocious beast fights a savage. In all that he says of Milton, we perceive the influence of the English circle which he frequented. So Bolingbroke spoke of the author of "Paradise Lost."

It was during Voltaire's stay in England that news was brought to the literary circle that a daughter of Milton was living in London, old, infirm, and very poor. "In a quarter of an hour," he tells us, "she was rich." He thought of this incident, thirty-five years later, when he was soliciting subscriptions for the edition of Corneille which he published for the benefit of the granddaughter of that poet, whom he had adopted and was educating. He used it as a spur to the zeal of those who were aiding him. Milton's daughter died soon after, but not before she had related many particulars of her father's life and habits, which Voltaire eagerly gathered and afterwards recorded.

The English comedy of that time appears to have afforded the stranger much enjoyment. He complains, however, of the indecency of the popular comedies. But he appears to have been shocked only at the indecency of the words employed, not at all at the enormous and hideous indecency of the events exhibited. "We are bound to consider," he remarks, "that, if the Romans permitted gross expressions in the satires which only a few people read, they allowed no improper words upon

the stage. For, as La Fontaine says, 'Chaste are the ears, though the eyes be loose.' In a word, no one should pronounce in public a word which a modest woman may not repeat." Here we have the explanation of the fact that an Englishman in Paris and a Frenchman in London are equally astounded at the indecency of the plays which they attend. The Frenchman brings to the theatre fastidious ears, and the Englishman chaste eyes. The third and fourth acts of "Tartuffe" contain nothing offensive to a French audience, though it would be shocked at some of the words in the first act of Othello. An Englishwoman can endure a gross word or two in the midst of a scene otherwise proper, but would be inclined to run out of the theatre upon the performance of a whole act of decorous seduction which threatens at every moment to be successful; the husband of the lady being hidden under the table, and appearing only when the author has exhausted every other resource.

Apropos of "Tartuffe," Voltaire gives an unexpected reason for the failure in England of a comedy which has given to the English stage so many of its religious hypocrites, and to Dickens perhaps his Uriah Heep. He says that before there can be false devotees there must be true ones; and one of the great advantages of the English nation is that it has no Tartuffes. "The English scarcely know the name of devotee; but they know well that of honest man. You do not see there any imbeciles who put their souls into the keeping of others, nor any of those petty ambitious men who establish in a neighborhood a despotic sway over silly women formerly wanton and always weak, and over men weaker and more contemptible than they."

Voltaire concludes his review of English literature by remarking, that, as the English had profited much from works in the French language, so the French, in their turn, ought to borrow from them. "We have both," he adds, "we and the English, followed the Italians, who are in everything our masters, and whom we have surpassed in some things. I know not to which of the three nations we ought to give the preference; but happy he who knows how to enjoy their different merits." In one particular, however, he awards the palm to England: England honored literature and learning most. In

France, he says, Addison might have been member of the Academy, and might have obtained a pension by the influence of a woman; or he might have been brought into trouble under the pretext that there might be found in his "Cato" some reflections upon the porter of a man in power. In England, he was secretary of state; Newton was master of the Mint; Congreve held an important office; Prior was plenipotentiary; Swift was dean in Ireland, and much more considered there than the primate; and if Pope's religion kept him out of office, it did not prevent his gaining two hundred thousand francs by his translation of Homer. "What encourages most the men of letters in England is the consideration in which they are held. The portrait of the prime minister is to be found hanging above the mantel-piece of his own study; but I have seen that of Mr. Pope in twenty houses."

Pope's position in the world of letters in 1728, the year of the "Dunciad," was indeed most brilliant; and I may almost add, terrible; for the man who can destroy a career or brand a name by a couplet, wields a terrible power. Voltaire marked the "Dunciad" well, and treasured up the hint it gave him. He could not issue *lettres de cachet*, but he saw Pope wreak a deadlier revenge upon his foes than ministers and mistresses did when they consigned men to the Bastille. He watched the career of Pope after he left England, and kept his notice of him in the Letters written up to the date of later editions.

"Pope [he wrote] is, I believe, the most elegant, the most correct, the most harmonious poet whom the English have possessed. He has reduced the sharp notes of the English trumpet to the soft tones of the flute. It is possible to translate him because he is extremely clear, and because his subjects for the most part are such as interest all mankind. . . . Pope's 'Essay on Man' appears to me to be the most beautiful didactic poem, the most useful, the most sublime, that has ever been written in any language. It is true, the basis of the work is found entire in the 'Characteristics of Lord Shaftesbury,' and I do not know why M. Pope gives credit only to M. de Bolingbroke, without saying a word of the celebrated Shaftesbury, pupil of Locke. As everything appertaining to metaphysics has been thought in all the ages and by every people who have cultivated their minds, this system much resembles that of Leibnitz, who

maintains that of all possible worlds God was bound to choose the best, and that in this best it was very necessary that the irregularities of our globe and the follies of its inhabitants should have their place. It resembles also the idea of Plato, that, in the endless chain of beings, our earth, our body, our soul, are in the number of necessary links. But neither Leibnitz nor Pope admits the changes which Plato imagines to have happened to those links — to our souls and to our bodies. Plato spoke like a poet in his scarcely intelligible prose, and Pope speaks like a philosopher in his admirable verses. He says that from the beginning everything was as it ought to be.

“I was flattered, I confess it, that he coincides with me in something which I wrote several years ago: ‘You are astonished that God has made man so limited, so ignorant, so little happy. Why are you not astonished that he did not make him more limited, more ignorant, more unhappy?’ When a Frenchman and an Englishman think the same thing, they certainly must be right.”

He mentions in this connection that Pope could not converse with him in the French language, though Racine the younger had published a French letter from Pope. “I know,” he says, “and all the men of letters in England know, that Pope, with whom I lived a good deal in England, could scarcely read French, that he spoke not one word of our tongue, that he never wrote a letter in French, that he was incapable of doing it, and that, if he wrote that letter to the son of our Racine, God, toward the end of his life, must suddenly have bestowed upon him the gift of tongues, to reward him for having composed so admirable a work as the ‘Essay on Man.’”

So passed his exile in England. So our student used his university. The *régime* had better kept him at home; but, since it did not, he made the best and the most of the opportunity.

During his residence abroad he did not lose his hold upon France. The French ambassador, we perceive, was well disposed toward him. There was already a considerable French colony in London, with head-quarters at the Rainbow coffee-house in Mary-le-bone. His old master, the Abbé d'Olivet, and his future enemy, Maupertuis, were both in London during his stay. The frequenters of the Rainbow had not done talking, in 1728, of Mademoiselle de Livri's

romantic marriage with the Marquis de Gouvernet. Stranded in London, a member of a bankrupt company of French actors, living on charity at a tavern, perhaps at the Rainbow itself, this young lady, whom Voltaire had introduced to the stage years before, had captivated a French marquis, and in 1727 was married to him, and was then living in Paris as a *grande dame*. Voltaire could have heard full particulars at the Rainbow, and he used them by and by as material for his comedy of "L'Ecossaise." With old French friends, too, he kept relations, writing once, and in the old familiar manner, to the Duchess du Maine.

In July, 1727, as the royal archives show, he received permission to visit Paris for three months on business, but did not go. Perhaps the business was arranged without him. If so, it was not with his brother Armand's good will. He could not be friends with Armand, though the Chânel rolled between them. In June, 1727, a few weeks before he obtained permission to go to Paris, he wrote to Thieriot: "You need not suspect me of having set foot in your country, nor even of having thought of doing so. My brother, especially, is the last man to whom such a secret could be confided, as much from his indiscreet character as from the ugly (*vilaine*) manner in which he has treated me since I have been in England. By all sorts of methods I have tried to soften the pedantic clownishness and insolent egotism with which he has overwhelmed me during these two years past. I confess to you, in the bitterness of my heart, that his insupportable conduct toward me has been one of my keenest afflictions."

Armand has left us no means of knowing his side of the story. Deacon Pâris had just died of self-torture in France, and the first miracle wrought at his bier bears date May 3, 1727; a miracle in which Armand Arouet believed with besotted and adoring faith. Strange spectacle! One brother in Paris gloating over tales of Convulsionist miracles, and the other brother in London writing "Charles XII.," "Brutus," and "Lettres Philosophiques," acting powerfully upon the intelligence of Europe, and holding up free England for France to see! What Darwin will explain to us so mysterious a fact in the natural history of our race?

CHAPTER XXIII.

RETURN TO FRANCE.

HIS exile was long for such an offense as he had committed. When the spring of 1729 opened, more than three years had passed since he had challenged the Chevalier de Rohan in the box of Madame Lecouvreur. He was doing very well in England, his richly endowed university, getting knowledge and winning prizes. But students are not apt to settle at their university, and no Frenchman so French as he was could be at home out of France. He did not like beer, nor the practice of drinking healths, nor London fogs; and on one occasion, it seems, some rough Londoners hustled him, and showed him how rude Britons in Hogarth's time felt toward the frog-eating French, their "natural enemies." He mounted a stone and harangued the mob: "Brave Englishmen, am I not already unhappy enough in not having been born among you?" He addressed them so eloquently, Wagnière records, that they "wished, at last, to carry him home on their shoulders!"¹

His portfolio, too, as we have seen, was getting full of things, printed and manuscript, that he yearned to give to a susceptible French public: a better "Henriade," a printed "Brutus," an outlined "Julius Cæsar," "English Letters" in a state of forwardness, and, above all, a "History of Charles XII.," gathered from eye-witnesses, compact with every element of interest, a fresher subject to that generation than Bonaparte was to Sir Walter Scott's, a work which he felt would pervade Europe as fast as printers could print copies. Other schemes were in his mind, for which he had made preparations: a *something* that should commemorate the picturesque and eventful reign of Louis XIV., and certain plays in which he would try Shakespearean innovations upon a French audience.

¹ 1 Mémoires sur Voltaire, 23.

Knowledge is the food of genius. His university of England had nourished him with new and fascinating knowledge of many kinds, and we see in his letters that he had a patriot's desire, as well as an author's ambition, to make his native land a sharer in his newly found treasures. Why, then, so long in England? Was the court implacable? The queen, Paris-Duverney, Richelieu, De Prie, Bourbon, all of whom had smiled upon him and done him substantial service, could not their influence avail in his behalf? No more than that of the lackeys who served them! The serene and astute old Cardinal de Fleury had driven them from court, and put the ablest of them, Paris-Duverney, into the Bastille, where he had been in rigorous confinement almost as long as Voltaire had been in exile.

Under personal government, as in the game of chess, the object of intrigue is to capture the king; and, as a means to that end, it is an important point to get the queen. But the taking of the queen is not always decisive, because the queen is not always on convenient terms with her husband. Paris-Duverney as financier may be almost said to have saved the monarchy; his and his three brothers' hard-headed sense being the antidote to the bane of John Law's inflation. But, as court intriguer, he was not successful; for in that vocation a knowledge of human nature is essential, which financiers do not usually possess. He gave France a queen, but that queen was not able to give him the king.

An intrigue of Louis XIV.'s cabinet drew those four remarkable brothers Paris from the obscurity of an Alpine hamlet, near Geneva, where their father kept an inn and cultivated land; a man of repute in his neighborhood; his four sons, all large, handsome men, intelligent, energetic, and punctiliously honest. Antoine Paris, Claude Paris, Joseph Paris, and Jean Paris were their real names; but the French indulge their own fancy in naming themselves, and the most eminent of these four, Joseph Paris, is only known in books as Paris-Duverney. Literary men should deal tenderly with his name and memory, for he it was who helped make the fortune of two of their fraternity, Voltaire and Beaumarchais. It is doubtful if the world had ever known its "Figaro" if Paris-Duverney had not sent Beaumarchais to Spain with a pocket full of money to speculate with.

It was a cabinet intrigue, I say, that gave the Alpine inn-keeper and his four fine boys an opportunity to show the great world the metal they were made of. Minister-of-Finance Pontchartrain had an interest in frustrating Minister-of-War Louvois, both being in the service of Louis XIV., and France being at war with Savoy. Pontchartrain had induced the king to give the contract for supplying the army to a new company offering to do the business cheaper. Louvois, offended at this interference, caused the army to move in such a way and at such a time that the contractors could not supply it. Remonstrance was unavailing. "Have thirty thousand sacks of flour on the frontier in depot, on a certain day, or your head shall answer it," was all the concession that could be wrung from the minister of war. The contractors' agent, in despair, opened his heart to his landlord, the Sieur Paris, known to be a man of resources, whose inn lay near the route by which provisions must pass. "Wait," said the landlord, in substance, "till the boys come in from the fields." A family consultation was held; the sons agreed that the thing could be done, and that they could do it. In this operation, as in all subsequent ones, the brothers acted together, with common purse, plan, and interest, each doing the part which nature and experience had best fitted him for. One brother scoured the country for mules; another borrowed the grain at Lyons; another arranged the lines of the laden beasts, and had them conducted to the frontier by paths known only to Alpine peasants. The business, in short, was accomplished, and the contractors gave these vigorous mountaineers such rewards and chances that before many years were past, they, too, became contractors and capitalists. It was chiefly they who supplied the armies of Louis XIV. while Marlborough was defeating them year after year, and on two or three or four occasions it was their amazing energy and disinterested patriotism that saved defeated armies from annihilation; freely expending all their own capital, and, what is much harder to such men, putting at hazard the millions borrowed on the sole security of their name and honor. When France issued from that long contest, in 1714, with her finances in chaos inconceivable, it was still these brothers who began to reduce them to order. Inflation Law drove them into brief exile, and ex-

aggerated the financial evil tenfold. The universal collapse of February, 1720, brought them back; and then, by five years of constant, well directed, well concerted toil, the proofs of which exist to this day, they put the finances of the kingdom into tolerable order, and so enabled the frugal, industrious French people to utilize the twenty years of peace which Cardinal de Fleury was about to give them. And thus it was that Paris-Duverney, the innkeeper's son, came to be, in 1725, the confidential secretary of the Duke of Bourbon, prime minister, as well as the trusted counselor of his mistress, the Marquise de Prie.

But in placing the daughter of a king-out-of-place upon the throne of France, he ventured beyond his depth. The intrigue both succeeded and failed. Their candidate, indeed, married the boy king, and Paris-Duverney induced her to give her "poor Voltaire" a pension of three hundred dollars a year; but when the moment came for her to deliver the young king into the hands of the Duke of Bourbon and his mistress, she was grieved to discover that she, young wife as she was, was no match for the old priest. The king liked his tutor, who was a singularly agreeable and placid old gentleman, and never asked one favor for himself or for a relation. The Duke of Bourbon was neither pleasing in his appearance nor winning in his demeanor. The king felt at home with the preceptor, felt safe with him, relished his company, and had perfect confidence in his fidelity.

The explosion occurred a few days after the departure of Voltaire for England in 1726. There were two parties at court playing for the possession of the king: one, headed by this quiet and good-tempered old priest; the other, by the Duke of Bourbon, aided conspicuously and actively by Madame de Prie, who in turn was directed by Paris-Duverney. The mistress was too aggressive, and too hungry for money. She was ill-spoken of out-of-doors; and, within the palace, she had many enemies. Fleury at length spoke to the prime minister, and advised him to end the scandal by sending the Marquise de Prie from court. The mistress, who was also *dame du palais* to the queen, resolved, "according to the rules of court warfare," to send away the preceptor.¹ The contest,

¹ Siècle de Louis XV., par Voltaire, chapter iii

short and decisive, had these results: the Duke of Bourbon was dismissed and "exiled" to his own château at Chantilly; Madame de Prie was exiled to her province, where she soon died in "the convulsions of despair;" Paris-Duverney was consigned to an insalubrious apartment in the Bastille; his chief clerk to a dungeon in the same château; his brothers were exiled; the Cardinal de Fleury became prime minister, drove many harpies from court, and for twenty years governed France with the minimum of waste possible under that *régime*. He was as avaricious for the king, St. Simon remarks, as he was regardless of personal emolument. Incidentally, our exile was affected; for his friends were in disgrace and could not help him.

The queen herself was formally placed under the control of the cardinal whom she had tried to displace. "I pray you, madame," wrote the king of sixteen to the queen of twenty-three, "and if necessary I command you, to do all that the bishop [De Fleury] may tell you to do from me, as if I had said it myself." For some time she was under a manifest cloud. During Voltaire's secret visit to Paris in the summer of 1726, he ventured, it seems, to go in some disguise to the theatre when the king and queen were to attend; the play being Racine's "Britannicus." "The king and queen," he wrote forty years after, "arrived an hour later than usual. The whole audience perceived that the queen had been crying; and I remember that when Narcisse pronounced this verse, 'Why delay, my lord, to repudiate her?' almost every one present looked toward the queen to observe the effect." This was at the crisis of the intrigue, and a few days after, as Voltaire adds, "Paris-Duverney was no longer master of the state."

The queen's persistence in presenting France with girls, when a boy was so intensely desired, did not help her friends in their time of trouble. The pair of girls with which she began in 1726 might have been pardoned, since their youthful sire was so proud of them; but a third princess in 1728 was resented as an impertinence, and not a gun saluted her arrival. While there is life there is hope. The saddened queen, as soon as she was well enough to go out, went in magnificent and solemn state to Notre Dame, attended by all her

ladies in four eight-horse carriages, and escorted by twenty guards, several pages and twelve footmen, to pray the Virgin to bestow upon her the honor of giving a dauphin to France. An immense concourse of people gathered in the streets to see her pass upon this errand. As she approached the church, a cardinal in his splendid robes, attended by a multitude of priests, advanced to the door to receive her. Advancing along the nave, she ascended a platform, and kneeling upon a cushion said her prayer, while thousands of spectators, upon their knees, joined in the entreaty. She rose, and took a seat prepared for her; after which a grand mass was said, accompanied with new and beautiful music composed for the occasion. At the conclusion of the ceremony she retired to an apartment adjacent, where, we are informed, she refreshed herself with a bowl of broth, and then returned to the palace with the same pomp, followed by the blessings of a countless multitude of people. Thirteen months after, to the inconceivable joy of France, the wished-for prince was born! Every bell in Paris rang a merry peal. Cannons were fired. For three evenings in succession Paris was ablaze with fire-works and illuminations, and on the following Sunday huge bonfires were lighted in every part of the city. The boy whose birth gave such delight did not live to reign over France; but he was the father of that Louis XVI. who perished during the French Revolution.

The cardinal minister was slow to forgive the man who had come near consigning him to the obscurity of a country bishopric. Paris-Duverney remained a prisoner nearly two years, and it was not till near the close of 1728, that the four brothers Paris were restored to liberty, so far as to be allowed to live together fifty miles from the capital. Other circumstances were favorable to the exile, and he resolved, early in 1729, without seeking a formal permission, which might have been refused, to venture to approach Paris as near as St. Germain-en-Laye, fifteen miles from the capital. "Write no more to your wandering friend," he wrote to Thieriot, March 10, 1729, "for at an early moment you will see him appear. Prepare to come at the first summons."

Rich booty as he brought with him from a foreign land, he did not return as a conqueror. About the middle of March,

a solitary traveler reached St. Germain-en-Laye, who called himself Monsieur Sansons, and took lodgings at the house of one Chatillon, wig-maker, Rue des Récollets, opposite to the monastery of the fathers so named. The new-comer dispatched a note to Thieriot: "You must ask for *Sansons*. He inhabits a hole in this barrack, and there is another for you," as well as "a bad bed and short commons." The friends were quickly reunited, and M. Sansons remained for several days in his hole hidden from mankind. The Richelieu château was not far off. That of the Duchess du Maine was within easy reach. Versailles was near. Obscure allusions in the letters indicate that a few individuals of his old circle were aware of his return, and took an interest in his safety. Near the end of March he ventured to take up his abode in Paris, at the house of one of his father's old clerks, where he saw no one but the "few indispensables." Every few days he changed his abode.

Richelieu, Thieriot, and other friends, all joined in advising him to apply for a royal warrant annulling the order of exile. April 7th he writes to Thieriot a sprightly letter, half in French, half in English, telling him that he will yield to their solicitations. He liked to mix his languages; this very note containing three. It is dated thus: "*Die Jovis, quem barbari Galli nuncupant Jeudi (7 Avril), 1729.*" He often makes similar reflections upon the French names of the days and months. The most material sentence of this note runs thus: "Puis donc que vous voulez tous que je sois ici avec un *warrant* signé Louis, go to Saint-Germain; I write to the Vizier Maurepas, in order to get leave to drag my chain in Paris." The minister gave him the warrant, and he was again a recognized inhabitant of his native city.

Already he had resumed work upon his "Charles XII." As soon as he had a room to work in, he must have begun; for with this note of April 7th, written eight days after he had reached Paris, he *returns* two great volumes (the "Diets of Poland," and a "History of Alexander the Great"), and asks Thieriot to find him an account of the topography of Ukraine and Little-Tartary. Assiduous Thieriot sends him maps of those regions, and is rewarded by being asked to find "a very detailed and very correct map of the world;" also a "Life of Peter the Great." So busy was he with this interesting work

that he could not find time to dine with Thieriot even on a Sunday afternoon, though engaged to do so. "Voltaire," he writes May 15th, "is a man of honor and of his word, if he is not a man of pleasure. He will not be able to take his place at table, but will drop in at the end of your orgie, along with that fool of a Charles XII." The orgie probably concluded with a reading of the chapter finished in the morning. On another occasion he tells Thieriot that he *will* dine with him "dead or alive."

After a short period, then, of apprehension and of wandering from one obscure lodging to another, we find him settled, restored to his rights and to his friends, hard at work upon his book, and sharing in the social life of Paris. He soon set Thieriot at work getting his pensions restored, and his arrears paid up; in which they succeeded, minus the deductions imposed on all pensioners by a cardinal avaricious for his king. Nor did he delay to put to good use those two or three thousand solid guineas that he brought from England. Accident helped him to a capital speculation. Supping one evening this spring with a lady of his circle, the conversation turned upon a lottery recently announced by the controller-general, Desforts, for liquidating certain onerous city annuities. La Condamine, the mathematician, who was one of the guests, remarked that any one who should buy all the tickets of this lottery would gain a round million. Voltaire silently reflected upon this statement. At the close of the feast he hurried away to moneyed friends, — doubtless to the brothers Paris, now restored to their career in Paris, who were closely allied to the richest banker of the day, Samuel Bernard. A company was formed; the tickets were all bought, and the prizes demanded. The controller-general, overwhelmed with confusion at this exposure of his blunder, refused to pay. The company appealed to the council, who decided in their favor. Voltaire gained a large sum by this happy stroke, exaggerated by one chronicle to half a million francs. He made, it is true, an enemy of the minister, who was *dévo*t; and he deemed it best to disappear from Paris, and spend some weeks with the Duke of Richelieu at the waters of Plombières; as lucky men with as go from Wall Street to Saratoga. But Desforts was soon after displaced, and the poet could safely return. Paris-Du-

verney did not forget the favor done him on this occasion, and before many years had rolled away he was able to make a substantial return in kind,

Voltaire never wanted money again, and never missed a good opportunity to increase his store. Later in the year 1729 we see him dropping work, starting in a post-chaise at midnight for Nancy, a hundred and fifty miles distant, — a ride of two nights and a day, — for the purpose of buying shares in public funds of the Duke of Lorraine. Arriving more dead than alive, he was informed that, by order of the duke, no shares were to be sold to strangers. But, as he related to President Hénault, “after pressing solicitations, they let me subscribe for fifty shares (which were delivered to me eight days after), by reason of the happy resemblance of my name to that of one of his Royal Highness’s gentlemen. I profited by the demand for this paper promptly enough. I have trebled my gold, and trust soon to enjoy my doubloons with people like you.” Ever after, as long as he lived, he was in the habit of performing feats of this kind; as attentive to business as though he had no literature; as devoted to literature as though he had no business. His life was to be henceforth, as it had been hitherto, a continuous warfare with powers that wielded the resources of a kingdom. He had need to provide himself with the sinews of war.

Full of his English ideas, it was inevitable that he should speak freely and warmly among his friends of the charms, the power, the safety of freedom; and it appears, too, that he now saw more clearly than before that there could be no freedom in a country in which existed an order of men clothed with authority to define what men must believe. The citadel of despotism, he discerned, was held by the hierarchy, whose power was founded upon human credulity. The lieutenant of police, we are told, sent for him soon after his return from England, and admonished him concerning the freedoms of his conversation. “I do not believe,” replied Voltaire, “that it is designed to hinder me from speaking freely in the houses of my friends. I write nothing, I print nothing, which can render me liable to censure or pursuit on the part of the government.” The lieutenant is said to have interrupted him here. “Whatever you may write,” said that officer, “you will never

succeed in destroying the Christian religion." To which Voltaire replied, "We shall see."

In resuming his social habits, he called upon the Marquise de Gouvernet, once Mademoiselle de Livri, the companion of his merry days, his *protégée* and pupil in the dramatic art. Her Swiss refusing to admit him, he sent her an epistle in the airiest, gayest, sauciest verse, recalling the time when, in an old hackney coach, without lackeys or ornaments, adorned only with her own charms, content with a bad soup, she had given herself to the lover who had consecrated to her his life. All the pomps and elegancies of her rank, he tells her, — "that large, white-haired Swiss who lies at your door without ceasing," "those brilliants hanging from your ears, those fragile marvels of your abode, — all, all are not worth one kiss that you gave in your youth." "The tender Loves and Laughs tremble to appear under your magnificent canopies. Alas! I have seen them get in by the window and play in your shabby lodgings." She did not resent his witty impudence. She kept the portrait he had given her in their foolish, happy days, for nearly sixty years. They were destined to meet again.

And so passed the first year of his return. He enjoyed comparative peace, because, as he said to the lieutenant of police, he printed nothing, published nothing. Let us see now how it fared with him when he resumed his vocation.

CHAPTER XXIV.

PURSUIT OF LITERATURE UNDER DIFFICULTIES.

“LA HENRIADE” was at length allowed to be sold in France. The applause of Europe, the patronage of friendly courts, the popularity of the work at home, had their effect upon a ministry every member of which, except one, seems to have enjoyed and admired the poem. There is reason to think that the Cardinal de Fleury himself did so. This wondrous *régime* often affords us the spectacle of an administration suppressing a book which nearly every member delighted in, and suppressing it, perhaps, with the more energy because they delighted in it. “La Henriade” was, however, only tolerated. “This new edition,” the author wrote, in 1731, “of the poem of ‘La Henriade,’ has been issued at Paris by the tacit permission of M. Chauvelin, Master of Requests, and of M. Hérault, Lieutenant of Police, without the Keeper of the Seals yet knowing the least thing about it.” There is another sentence in the same letter which the reader will do well to bear in mind: “All M. de Chauvelin desires is to give no pretext to complaints against himself;” and M. de Chauvelin was the *protégé* and confidant of the Cardinal de Fleury. Of all the cabinet he stood nearest to the prime minister. Henceforth, then, “La Henriade” was a tolerated book in France.

The tragedy of “Brutus,” printed in England in 1727, and since revised, was offered to the manager in December, 1729. The author invited the actors to dinner, with Thieriot and one or two other friends. After dinner, he read the play; which was accepted, put in rehearsal, and announced for presentation. Some places were sold for the opening night, when suddenly the author withdrew the piece, giving two reasons for so doing. “I am assured on all sides,” he wrote to Thieriot, “that M. de Crébillon [dramatic author]

has gone to seek M. de Chabot [Chevalier de Rohan], and has formed a plot to damn 'Brutus,' which I am unwilling to give them the pleasure of doing. *Besides*, I do not think the piece worthy of the public. So, my friend, if you have engaged seats, send and get your money back." The second reason French writers think was the controlling one, since Crébillon was not given to intrigue, and the author of "Brutus" fell to revising the play again.

In March, 1730, occurred the sudden death of the actress, Adrienne Lecouvreur, aged twenty-eight. She played for the last time, March 15th, in Voltaire's "Œdipe," and played, despite her disorder, with much of her accustomed force and brilliancy. In accordance with the barbarous custom of the time there was an afterpiece, in which she also appeared; and she went home from the scene of her triumphs to die after four days of anguish. Voltaire hastened to her bedside, and watched near her during her last struggle for life; and when she was seized with the convulsions that preceded her death, he held her in his arms and received her last breath. Being an actress, and dying without absolution, she was denied "Christian burial," and the gates of every recognized burial place in France were closed against her wasted body, the poor relics of a gifted and bewitching woman, whom all that was distinguished and splendid in the society of her native land had loved to look upon. At night her body was carried in an old coach (*fiacre*) a little way out of town, just beyond the paved streets, to a spot near the Seine now covered by the house No. 109 Rue de Bourgogne. The *fiacre* was followed by one friend, two street-porters, and a squad of the city watch. There her remains were buried, the grave was filled up, and the spot remained unenclosed and unmarked until the city grew over it and concealed it from view.

The brilliant world of which she had been a part heard of this unseemly burial with such horror, such disgust, such rage, such "stupor," as we can with difficulty imagine, because all those ties of tenderness and pride that bind families and communities together are more sensitive, if not stronger, in France than with our ruder, robuster race. The idea of not having friendly and decorous burial, of not lying down

at last with kindred and fellow citizens in a place appointed for the dead, of being taken out at night and buried at a corner of a road like a dead cat, was and is utterly desolating to the French people. Voltaire, for example, could never face it; he lived and died dreading it.

And the effect of the great actress's surreptitious burial was increased by various circumstances. That gifted woman possessed all the virtues except virtue; and, unhappily, virtue the gay world of Paris did not care for. Nature and history pronounce virtue, whether in man or woman, the indispensable preliminary to well-being, and the church was right in so regarding it. But Paris loved rather to repeat that she had pledged all her jewels to help her lover (*one* of her lovers), Maurice de Saxe, son of Augustus, king of Poland. Paris remarked that, if she had not partaken of the sacraments, she had at least left a thousand francs to the poor of her parish. The gay world dwelt much upon her noble disinterestedness in refusing to receive the addresses of Count d'Argental, though that infatuated young man loved her to the point of being willing to sacrifice his career to her. That she had borne two children to two lovers, that she had expended the precious treasure of her life and genius in a very few years of joyless excitement, that she had lived in utter disregard of the unchangeable conditions of human welfare, as well as those of the highest artistic excellence,—who thought of that? Who *could* think of that in connection with such an outrage upon her wasted remains?

Voltaire, who owed so much to this brilliant woman who owed so much to him, was profoundly moved. To the assembled company of actors, her companions in glory and in shame, he said: "Announce to the world that you will not exercise your profession, until you, the paid servants of the king, are treated like other citizens in the king's service." They promised him; but who was to maintain them in the interval? The chiefs of the company only received from a thousand to two thousand francs a year. "They promised," he wrote thirty years after, "but did nothing further in the matter. They preferred dishonor with a little money, to honor, which would have been worth more to them."¹

¹ Voltaire to Mademoiselle Clairon, August 17, 1761.

It so chanced that a few months later, in the same year, died Anne Oldfield, for many years the glory of the London stage; who also left two children to two of her lovers. She was buried with public ceremonial in Westminster Abbey, her remains followed by persons eminent in rank and in gifts. It was when Voltaire heard of Mrs. Oldfield's honorable obsequies that his feelings found expression in his well-known poem on the death of Mademoiselle Lecouvreur, which expressed the feelings of the public also. In Greece, he cried, such a woman would have had an altar! Living, France hung in rapture upon her lips; dead, she is a criminal! "Ah, shall I always see my feeble nation blasting what it admires, sleeping under the dominance of superstition? O London, happy land, where no art is despised, where every kind of success has its glory, where the conqueror of Tallard, son of Victory, the sublime Dryden, the wise Addison, the charming Ophils (Oldfield), and the immortal Newton, all have their place in the Temple of Glory!"

This poem, handed about in the drawing-rooms for many weeks in manuscript, attracted the notice of the ministry at length, and endangered the safety of the author for a while. Fortunately, he was absent from Paris at the time, and could take measures to avert the peril. His indignation, he confessed, may have carried him too far, but he thought it "pardonable in a man who had been her admirer, her friend, her lover, and who, besides, was a poet." So, perhaps, thought the ministry, and the storm blew over.

It was during this year, 1730, that he began that burlesque poem upon Jeanne Dare, "La Pucelle," which for thirty years disturbed his repose, very much as a packet of gunpowder might disturb the repose of a man who was obliged to keep it in his writing desk. The work was suggested at the supper-table of the Duke of Richelieu; where, the conversation turning upon the exploits of the Maid of Orleans, some one mentioned Chapelain's heroic poem on the subject, which was satirized so severely by Boileau, and the guests began to quote absurd bits from it, greatly to the general amusement. After this had gone on for some time, the following conversation occurred between the giver of the feast and Voltaire:—

RICHELIEU. — "I bet that if you had treated this subject, you would have produced a better work, and you would not have found it necessary, in order to magnify your principal character, to make a saint of her."

VOLTAIRE. — "I doubt much if I should have been able to make a good serious work of it. In the history of Jeanne Darc there are too many trivial circumstances bordering upon the burlesque, and others altogether too atrocious. How to inspire a great interest in the minds of people of taste for a girl in man's dress, who begins by leaving a tap-room and ends by being burnt alive? Boileau himself could not have succeeded in it. My belief is that, under more than one aspect, this subject, drawn from our own annals, would lend itself better to jocular than heroic treatment."

RICHELIEU. — "I think so too, and no one would be more capable than you of doing it well, if you would undertake it. You ought to give us something upon it."¹

The guests applauding, as guests usually applaud a duke's suggestions at his own table, the poet mentioned various objections. They pressed the subject upon him, and he at last promised to take it into consideration. He had been reading Italian a good deal during late years; and now, casting aside his serious work, he dashed into a poem upon the "Pucelle" in the manner of Ariosto, and in a few weeks he had four cantos done. The company reassembled at the Hôtel de Richelieu, to whom these four cantos were read, eliciting boisterous applause.

From this time the author worked occasionally upon the poem, relieving thereby the severity of other labors, until he had produced the work in twenty-one cantos as we have it now. He boasted that his burlesque was not as long as that of Ariosto. "I should have been ashamed," he once wrote, "to have employed thirty cantos in those fooleries and debaucheries of the imagination. These amusements are the interludes to my occupations. I find that one has time for everything if one wishes to employ it."

This mock-heroic poem of nearly ten thousand lines, the longest of his poetical works, is strictly in the line of Voltaire's accepted vocation, which was to terminate the domination of legends over the human mind. Unfortunately, it was not in his power at that time to know how much truth there

¹ Mémoires sur Voltaire, par S. G. Longchamp, Article XIV.

was in the legend of the patriotic and devoted girl who bled for her country and began the expulsion of the invader from French soil. Among the manuscripts in the royal archives, not then accessible, was the report of the trial of Jeanne Darc, which was published some years ago in five octavo volumes by the Historical Society of France. From this valuable publication, one of the most interesting memorials of that age, we are now able to understand her and her work; and, though we cannot deny that there was an ingredient of imposture in her career, and even conscious imposture, it becomes plain that the impulse which sent her forth and sustained her to the end was noble and disinterested. The Maid possessed some intelligence, great courage, and great fortitude. Unlike ordinary religious impostors, she bore her banner in the front of the battle, where wounds and death were in the air; she used religion in such a way as to change the French army from a crowd of roystering thieves, ravishers, and drunkards into moral, resolute, disciplined, victorious soldiers; and, at last, after baffling for five months the sixty priests who tried her, she courted the stake rather than endure degrading and hopeless imprisonment.

But Voltaire could have known scarcely anything of all this, and he employed the old legend of the Maid as a vehicle for twenty-one cantos of uproarious burlesque, in which he found opportunity, from time to time, to ridicule all the objects of his aversion, animate and inanimate, tossing in the same blanket saints, poets, critics, bishops, beliefs, rites, usages, human foibles, private enemies, public grievances, — all with the same buoyant, inexhaustible vivacity. Open the poem anywhere, and you alight upon something that would bring a grin to the cast-iron visage of a Calvin — if he was alone. It was written for a generation that had no more notion of what we mean by the word “decency” than the ladies had who told and heard the stories of the “Decameron.” For twenty-five years one of the greatest proofs of devotion which one woman of “taste” could give another was to procure for her the perusal of a new canto of “La Pucelle.” The Queen of Prussia not only read it, but permitted her young daughter to hear it read. The author’s old professor, Abbé d’Olivet, bantered him upon it, as upon a jest, a little free perhaps, but quite

allowable. Ladies were particularly fond of such literature then, and I notice that when an author in that age wrote something for a lady's forfeit, he usually accommodated himself to the ruling taste of the sex by producing a tale like those in the "Decameron." Voltaire invariably did so. Our conception of decency, in short, is a thing of yesterday; not on that account the less to be approved and upheld; but not to be applied as a moral test to the literature of past ages.

Henceforth, then, we are to imagine a mass of blotted manuscript in the poet's desk, or carelessly left lying about on his table, liable to be copied by curious visitors and by unfaithful secretaries; a manuscript sure to be called for by guests "of taste," which the owner thereof was only too willing to read aloud for their entertainment; a manuscript of which vague rumors soon got afloat in the drawing-rooms, and reached the ears of ministers; a manuscript with exile and the Bastille in it, if not the wheel and the stake. In that immoral age, when living virgins were merchaudise which the king himself bought, a light song about the Virgin could bring a man to the fire.

His English Letters were ready for publication. What trouble it cost him to get that little book before the public of France! In the autumn of 1730 he sent Thieriot to England with letters to his old friends in that country, to arrange for its translation into English and its publication in London. That was not difficult, and in due time Thieriot accomplished his errand, and gained, as it is said, four hundred pounds sterling by it. In France, meanwhile, Voltaire strove to conciliate the powers in favor of the book, and endeavored to reduce the offense in it to the minimum. "I have been obliged," he wrote to a friend, "to change all that I had written upon M. Locke, because, after all, I wish to live in France, and it is not permitted to me to be as philosophic as an Englishman. At Paris I have to disguise what I could not say too strongly in London. This circumspection, unfortunate but necessary, obliges me to erase more than one passage, sufficiently amusing, upon the Quakers and Presbyterians. My heart bleeds for it; Thieriot will suffer by it; you will regret those places, and I also. I have read to Cardinal de Fleury two letters upon the Quakers, from which I had taken great pains to cut

out all that could alarm his devout and sage Eminence. He found the residue pleasant enough; but the poor man does not know what he lost."

His "History of Charles XII." was nearly ready for the press early in 1730, and, having submitted it to the appointed censor, he received a royal "privilege" to publish it in France. For once, as he fondly thought, he had produced a work in which no offense could be found, and which must be agreeable to the administration, since it paid abundant honor to King Stanislas, father of the Queen of France. Fortune, indeed, had favored this history from its conception by giving the author familiar access to a great number of individuals who had personal knowledge of the strange events to be related. Nearly every page of it was composed from information derived from eye-witnesses. He had lived familiarly with Baron de Goëtz, favorite minister of Charles XII., distinguished in history as the only man who ever suffered death for the pernicious error of inflating a country's currency. King Stanislas himself had given and continued to give him important aid. Maurice de Saxe, son of Augustus of Poland and an actor in the scenes delineated, he had met constantly in the society of Madame Lecouvreur. Bolingbroke, who was in power during part of Charles's wild career, threw light upon the diplomacy and politics of his subject. In England the Duchess of Marlborough imparted to him much which she remembered of her husband's dealings with the Swedish king. Curious details of the king's life in Turkey he derived from Fonseca, a Portuguese physician established then at Constantinople, and in practice among the viziers and pachas. A relation of Voltaire's, M. Bru, "first dragoman to the Porte," aided him also. Baron Fabrice, long the reader and secretary of the Swedish king, gave him anecdotes and details in great number. The work was made up of "interviews;" but those interviews were not presented in crude, enormous masses, but digested into a narrative, bright, clear, and serene, that could be read in two evenings. Voltaire told this wild and wondrous tale as Sallust tells the story of Jugurtha; and there is revealed to the observant reader the author's contempt for the hero, as well as his compassion for a human race so imperfectly developed as to *permit* a silly and ignorant young man to work

such causeless havoc among innocent populations. The book is a satire upon personal government of unequaled force, and the more effective from being so brief and so easily read.

Superstition, the chief stay of personal government in modern times, is so quietly satirized that the censor did not perceive the satire. The Muscovites, said the sly author, have scruples about drinking milk on fast days, but fathers, priests, wives, and maidens get drunk upon brandy on days of festival. "In that country, as elsewhere, there are disputes upon religion; the greatest quarrel being upon the question whether the laity ought to make the sign of the cross with two fingers or with three." The passage, too, upon the establishment of the printing-press in Russia was amusing: "The monk objected, and used the printing-press to prove the Czar Antichrist. Another monk, with an eye to preferment, refuted the book, and demonstrated that Peter was not Antichrist, because the number 666 was not in his name. The author of the libel was broken upon the wheel; the author of the refutation was made Bishop of Rezan."

Happy in his "privilege," Voltaire put the work to press in Paris, and in the autumn of 1730 had an edition of twenty-six hundred copies of the first volume ready for distribution. Suddenly, without cause assigned, by a mere fiat of authority, the privilege was withdrawn and the whole edition seized, except one copy which the author chanced to have in his own possession.

What could be the matter? Voltaire sought information from the Keeper of the Seals, and obtained it. A turn in the politics of Europe obliged the French ministry to avoid displeasing Augustus, King of Poland, who was not treated very tenderly in the work! "In *this* country," the author wrote to a friend, "it seems to me that Stanislas ought to be considered rather than Augustus, and I flatter myself that Stanislas' daughter, Marie, would not take in ill part the good things I have said of her father." The minister admitted that he saw no harm in the work, and the minister's son declared, soon after, in a moment of enthusiasm, that if Voltaire did not publish it, he would. But the minister was firm in his resolve not to permit the book to appear *cum privilegio*, alleging always the necessity the King of France was under to *ménager*

the actual King of Poland instead of his father-in-law, the late king.

Here was a dead lock, — two works ready to appear, with little chance of their appearing; both being productions which, for various reasons, an author would naturally be in a fever to see in print. The foaming rage of desire which makes the buffalo toss the sods of the prairie in the summer day, regardless of the shrieking train, is not stronger than an author's passion to communicate to the public a book in which he has put his convictions, his patriotism, and his ambition. Privilege or no privilege, these two little books must see the light! Such was the resolve of their author in the late weeks of 1730. He recalled the time when Thieriot and himself had had "La Henriade" printed at Rouen, and had smuggled copies to Paris by barge and wagon. He wrote to his old friend and schoolfellow, M. de Cideville, now settled in the magistracy at Rouen, explaining his dilemma, and asking him if he could find there a place where he could live for some months in strict incognito, and a printer who could do the work required. Yes, replied his friend, Jore, printer and bookseller of Rouen, will be glad to provide lodgings for an anonymous author, and print for him as well.

Two things detained him at Paris a few weeks. He had an interest in a vessel named The Brutus, coming from Barbary to Marseilles laden with grain; and his tragedy of "Brutus," revised and altered, was again in rehearsal, and announced for presentation December 11, 1730. An immense audience filled the theatre on the opening night, and the piece was received with that kind of applause which denotes a house packed with friends of the author. But the next night's receipts revealed the truth. First night, 5065 francs; second night, 2540 francs; fifteenth and last night, 660 francs. The fable of a father dooming his sons to death may be endured in the reading, but we cannot *see* him do it, either with pleasure or approval; and it had been found impossible by dramatists, hitherto, to fill up five acts with interesting pretexts for such atrocious virtue. Voltaire expresses surprise that Shakespeare did not treat a subject that seemed so suitable to the English stage, and lay so obviously in Shakespeare's path. That such a master deliberately forbore to attempt it might well have

been a warning to after-comers. Voltaire's piece, however, contains three scenes of commanding effect, as well as a great number of striking verses, and when the play used to be given during the delirium of the Revolution, in 1792, it excited tumultuous enthusiasm.

On his way home from one of the representations of this play, the author learned that the ship Brutus, reported lost, had arrived safely at her port. "Well," said the poet to his factor, "since the Brutus of Barbary has come in, let us console ourselves a little for the sorry welcome given to the Brutus of ancient Rome. Perhaps a time will come when they will do us justice."¹

The part of Tullie in the new tragedy was performed by a girl of fifteen, who appeared on the stage for the first time. She was terribly frightened on the opening night, and could not play the part as she had played it during the rehearsals. The next morning the author reassured her by a letter which was all tact and goodness.

"Prodigy [he wrote], I present you a 'Henriade,' a very serious work for your age; but she who plays Tullie is capable of reading; and it is quite right that I should offer my works to one who embellishes them. I thought to die last night, and am in a wretched state this morning; but for which I should be at your feet to thank you for the honor you are doing me. The piece is unworthy of you; but, rely upon it, you are going to win great glory in investing my rôle of Tullie with your own charms. . . . Do not be discouraged. Think how marvelously well you played at the rehearsals, and that nothing was wanting to you yesterday but confidence. Your timidity even did you honor. To-morrow you must take your revenge. . . . In God's name, be tranquil! Though you should not make a decided hit, what does it matter? You are but fifteen, and people could only say that you are not yet what you will be one day. For my part, I have nothing but thanks for you. . . . Begin by having some friendly regard for me, who love you like a father, and you will play my rôle in an interesting manner."

He was too sick to go to the theatre on the second night, but toward the close of the evening his valet brought him the good news that Tullie had "played like an angel!"

In distributing the new edition of "La Henriade," he

† Duvernet, chapter vii.

sent a copy also to his ancient master, Father Porée, of the Collège Louis-le-Grand, asking him to receive it with some indulgence, and to think of him as a son who came, after the lapse of many years, to present to his father the fruit of his labors in an art which that father had originally taught him. He asked him also to point out any places in the poem where he had not spoken of religion as he ought, that he might correct them in the next edition. "I desire your esteem, not only as author, but also as a Christian."

About the middle of March, 1731, giving out on all sides that he was about to return to England, he disappeared from Paris, and took up his abode in obscure lodgings at the ancient city of Rouen, in the character of an English lord exiled for political offenses and obliged to live in strict seclusion. A valet, hired for the occasion at twenty sous per diem, added to the usual duties of a valet that of conveying proof-sheets between author and printer; M. Jore, also, was ever attentive to the pleasure of milord. In the summer, he removed to a farm-house near by, and then a servant-girl was his messenger, going to the printing-house three times a week. In the intervals of proof-reading, he worked, with even more than his usual assiduity, upon his tragedy of "Julius Cæsar," upon "Eriphyle," a tragedy sketched before leaving Paris, and upon the closing part of "Charles XII." He could write in June to Thieriot that, in spite of a slow fever that kept him miserable for some weeks, he had written two tragedies and finished "Charles XII." in three months. "In Paris, I could not have done that in three years. But you know well what a prodigious difference there is between a mind in the calm of solitude and one dissipated in the world." After a residence in and near Rouen of six months or more, he returned to Paris, without having yet seen a copy of his history. Great bundles of copies, however, soon arrived. We find him writing to a Rouen friend in October: "If it will cost only sixty livres by land, send the packages by the carrier to the address of the Duke of Richelieu, at Versailles, and I, being informed of day and hour of arrival, will not fail to send a man in the Richelieu livery, who will deliver the whole safely. If the land carriage is too expensive, I pray you to forward them by

water to St. Cloud, whither I will send a wagon for them." These *ballots*, probably, contained copies for the queen and court.

"Charles XII." was received with heartiest welcome in all countries which contained an educated class. Translations and new editions followed one another quickly, until it reached the whole reading public of Europe and America. When a writer takes all the trouble and leaves the reader nothing but pleasure, it is usual for critics to surmise that the author invented romantic or convenient circumstances. This work, written during the lifetime of thousands of men who had taken part in the events described, was subjected to severe and repeated scrutiny. The author, sedulous to profit by this, incorporated new facts from time to time, and corrected errors, until it was, perhaps, as true a narrative as written language could present of a career involving so many extraordinary and distant scenes. It remains to this day the only work of the author which has universal and unimpeded currency, being used as a school-book in all countries where French is a part of polite education. At the time it gave him a perceptible increase of reputation, as well as a certain weight with the public which he had not before possessed. It widened his celebrity, since there are ten persons who can enjoy an easy, limpid narrative in prose, for one who finds pleasure in classic poetry.

The English Letters were not yet seen in France. The author was still modifying the audacities, and veiling the heresies, and cutting away the inadmissibles, ever hoping to render the work such as a not ungenial cardinal might tacitly allow to circulate. It surprises us that he could have indulged such an expectation; but we perceive from his familiar correspondence with comrades that he did so.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE CONVULSIONIST MIRACLES.

ON the return of Voltaire to Paris, late in the summer of 1731, he found his fellow-citizens again agitated by the ancient Jansenist and Molinist controversy. From being the sport of theologians, it had now come to be the scoff of the polite world and the scourge of the people. At that time France may have contained a population of twenty millions, of whom, perhaps, two millions could read, and half a million may have had mental culture enough to follow with pleasure an easy narrative like Voltaire's "Charles XII." When Talleyrand visited Yale College, as late as 1794, he told the president that he thought eighteen millions of the French people could neither read nor write.

An ignorant people take instinctively to the severer modes of religion, as they do to the severer schools of law and physic. They like their medicine, whether for mind or body, exceedingly nauseous and painful. They love the terrors of the law. Jansenism, too, had the advantage, which Voltaire enjoyed, of being constantly denounced and prosecuted by the government,—the most effective mode of advertising then invented. Hence the "philosophers" and the Jansenists shared the sovereignty over the French mind between them: the philosophers swaying the few thousands who partook of the intellectual life of the age, and the Jansenists controlling many hundreds of thousands who sought welfare through religion. As late as 1731, Voltaire could still say, with an approach to truth, that all France was Jansenist, except the Jesuits, the bishops, and the court.

It may have been on the very day of his reappearance in Paris, in 1731, that he witnessed the solemn and elaborate burning (August 29th) of a small Jansenist book by the public executioner. The book was the "Life of Deacon Pâris," or,

as the Jansenists loved to style him, Saint Pâris; a name of renown at that day among millions of Frenchmen who lived and died in ignorance of the name of Voltaire. The college of cardinals and the chiefs of the inquisition united in denouncing this little book, in menacing with "the excommunication major" all who should even read it, and in condemning it to be publicly burned. In the open space, opposite the convent of Minerva, a very large platform was built, and in front of it, at a distance of thirty paces, a stake was set up, as though Deacon Pâris himself was to be burned. The cardinals ascended the platform, to the eldest of whom the clerk of their court presented the unhappy Book, with thin chains twisted about it and fastened with care. The cardinal in chief handed the book thus bound to the grand inquisitor, who gave it back to the clerk. That officer then handed it to the provost, who gave it to a bailiff, who passed it on to a watchman, who placed it in the hands of the executioner, who raised it high above his head, slowly and gravely turning round to the four points of the compass. He then took off the chains from the book, tore out the leaves, one at a time, dipped each leaf in boiling pitch, and, finally, the whole mass of leaves being placed at the stake, he set fire to it, and regaled the people with a fine blaze.¹

Why this childish scene? And who was Deacon Pâris? The reader who would understand Voltaire and his time must know what that thing was which called itself "religion" in his day, and how it presented itself to his eyes. I will therefore briefly answer these questions, reminding the reader, once more, that of these two brothers Arouet, one looked upon the scenes about to be described with contemptuous pity, and the other with rapturous approval.

Francis Pâris, born 1690, son of an eminent and wealthy Paris lawyer, imbibed the notion in childhood from his Jansenist teachers that the great interest of man is to propitiate an almost implacable deity by self-inflicted torture. He abandoned the profession of the law, to which his father destined him, refused the rank and inheritance of eldest son, and accepted from his father's large estate only a small pension, one fourth of his legal right. His father's death setting him

¹ Histoire du Parlement de Paris, par Voltaire, chapter lxiv.

free from restraint, his first care was to disengage himself from all worldly affairs and ties. Part of his inheritance was a mass of silver plate, weighing two hundred pounds. This he sold, and divided the proceeds among the poor. He inherited also a quantity of linen and other household stuffs, which his mother, according to the provident custom of the age, had accumulated. The linen he gave to a number of poor priests for surplices, and the other fabrics he divided among the poor families of his parish. Some barrels of salt had come to him, salt being then a very expensive article; this he distributed among the poor. Having thus disposed of his superfluous effects, and having remained at home long enough to see his younger brother married and settled, he went forth to begin his long-desired life of entire consecration to propitiatory religion.

He retired to a village near Chartres, hired secluded apartments, and gave himself up to prayers, study, fasting, and self-torture. All day he remained alone in his room, studying Hebrew, reading theology, and praying. He wore a hair shirt next his skin, and fasted on all the appointed days most rigorously, not eating a morsel of food till sunset. On Sundays he performed, at the request of the parish priest, the duty of catechizing the children. In winter he would have no fire in his room, and when the cold was too severe to be borne he merely covered his feet with a hair cloth.

He often changed his place of abode, but never his habits, except that he constantly increased the severity of his self-inflicted torments. Being intrusted by his parish priest with the charge of the young candidates for the priesthood, he led them to practice such extreme self-denial that he was complained of to the archbishop, who was thus made acquainted with his character. Instead of his reproving his excessive and ill-directed zeal, the archbishop desired to reward it by bestowing upon him the dignity of deacon, and held out to him the promise of still further advancement. The zealot deemed himself unworthy of the honor, and long refused it. His scruples being at length overcome, he was ordained, and thus acquired the title by which he is now known. Other ecclesiastical honors, though they were often pressed upon him, he declined.

As he advanced in life his austerities still increased, and he resolved, at last, to retire wholly from the haunts of men. First he traveled on foot over France, seeking some monastery congenial to him. From this journey he ingeniously extracted all the misery it could be made to yield, pursuing his weary way through all kinds of weather, ill clad, half starved, and lodging in the stables of the poorest inns. But in all his wanderings he found no retreat that promised sufficient severity, and he returned to Paris to contrive one for himself. There he withdrew to a mean and secluded abode, and set about the work of torturing himself to death with renewed vigor.

It was his habit now to fast during the whole forty days of Lent as rigorously as he had been used to fast on single days, never eating until sunset, and then only bread and water, nor much of them. Toward the close of the forty days he really suffered as much as his heart could wish. He would sometimes fall into convulsions, and endured awful pangs and spasms, which he attributed to the efforts of the devil to shake his purpose. He slept upon a straw mattress, except in seasons of penitence, when he preferred the floor. He had in his little room a table, one chair, no fire-place, and he ate nothing but bread, water-cress, and other raw herbs, with the occasional luxury of a hard-boiled egg or a plate of thin soup sent in to him by his landlord, a poor lace-maker. To still further mortify himself, he bought a stocking-frame, and earned his livelihood by making stockings, concealing from his fellow-lodgers that he possessed an independent income. His landlord, for a considerable time, thought he was a poor stocking-weaver, and it was in compassion for his supposed poverty that he sent him in the soup.

Having exhausted, at length, all the usual modes of self-sacrifice, he hit upon a new one: *he resolved to deny himself the consolations of religion itself!* For two years he abstained from taking the communion, alleging that he was unworthy; and it was only at the express command of his ecclesiastical superiors that he again partook of it. Frustrated thus in this design of tormenting his soul, he aggravated the tortures of his body, saying that, as every part of his body within and without was sinful, it was necessary that every part of it

should suffer, and suffer severely. Now it was that he added to his shirt of coarsest hair a girdle of iron, and to that a breastplate of iron wire in the form of a heart, with points of wire on the side next his flesh; so that when, in his penitential frenzies, he beat his breast with his hands the blood flowed.

The poor misguided man persevered in this suicidal course till he brought himself to death's door. When he lay helpless upon his straw his friends gathered round him and strove to alleviate his condition. He steadfastly refused their offers, and turned a deaf ear to all remonstrance, blaming himself only for not having concealed his sufferings, and saying that if he recovered his health he must "serve God" more faithfully than he had done before. He died aged thirty-seven, and was buried in a cemetery of his native city. He died of self-mortification at about the age when many young men (Byron and Burns, for example) die of self-indulgence, — a meaner and madder kind of suicide than his.

It was not till after his death that the events occurred which have caused this poor man to be so long remembered. The more ignorant Jansenists of Paris, hearing of the manner of his life and death, regarded him as a saint, and looked upon his burial-place as holy ground.

I once asked a distinguished judge of New York what he had learned by sitting thirty years upon the bench. He answered promptly, "The difficulty of arriving at truth through human testimony."

A catalogue of the miracles wrought at the tomb of Deacon Pâris, in three volumes folio, was published by a respectable priest, each miracle being supported by sworn testimony, taken before notaries, and certified in proper form. This testimony, upon many of the cases, is of such a nature and is so abundant in quantity that it would command a verdict, as the learned judge himself would charge. To illustrate the fallibility of human evidence, I will give a few examples drawn from this ponderous work.

Deacon Pâris died on the 1st of May, 1727. A woman, aged sixty-two, had met and exchanged civilities with the holy man. For many years she had had a withered arm, which was so useless that she was accustomed to hang it in a sling, while

she exercised her vocation of silk-winder. Hearing of the death of the venerated deacon, she determined to attend his funeral, and to pray at his grave for the restoration of her arm. Entering the apartment where lay the emaciated body prepared for the tomb, she fell upon her knees, lifted the cloth which covered the feet, and kissed them, saying, "Blessed saint, pray the Lord to cure me, if it is his will that I remain upon earth. Your prayers will be heard; mine are not." When the body was placed upon the bier, she leaned forward, and rubbed her arm with the pall. Having seen the corpse deposited in the tomb, she returned to her house and resumed her usual employment. What was her astonishment to discover that she had no longer any need of her sling, and could use one arm with the same facility as the other. The withered member had regained its former roundness and vigor, and she could lift with it as much as ever she could; nor had she ever after any return of the malady. The narrative of her cure, which she made on oath before a notary, is full and particular.

The fame of this miracle being spread abroad, other afflicted persons resorted to the tomb to avail themselves of its mysterious virtues. A Spanish nobleman, member of the Royal Council of Spain, had sent his son to Paris to complete his education. This young man, by a succession of accidents, lost the use of one of his eyes, and finally the eye itself oozed away. The doctors having abandoned his case in despair, he repaired to the tomb of Deacon Pâris, and there prayed most fervently for the restoration of his eye. His cure, though not sudden, was complete. He placed upon his eye a small piece of the shirt in which the deacon had died, and instantly felt some relief. That evening, upon going to sleep, he again placed the relic over his eye. "In the silence and secrecy of the night," says our chronicler, "the cure began, and when the young man woke, at three in the morning, his eye was perfectly restored, for he could see through the window of his room the houses on the opposite side of the street!" He rose joyful from his bed, threw off his bandages, and hastened to the tomb to return thanks.

Not only is this miraculous cure supported by an abundance of sworn testimony, but I have before me a letter, writ-

ten by Charles Rollin, the celebrated historian, in which he expresses his entire belief in the miracle. Dr. Rollin says: "I saw the sad condition to which Don Alphonse was reduced by the loss of one eye and the malady of the other, and I was agreeably surprised to see *the sudden and perfect change* which occurred in it, when every one despaired of its cure. This testimony I render with joy to the singular grace which God has shown to a young man whom I loved the more tenderly because Providence himself seemed to have consigned him to my care."

Several volumes could be filled with similar narratives, some of which are more wonderful and incredible even than this. There was, for example, an old lady of sixty-nine, swollen to a monstrous size by dropsy, covered with ulcers, an object of horror to every beholder. There are one hundred pages of testimony, much of it given by surgeons of reputation, to the effect that this woman was instantly and completely cured by praying upon the tomb of Deacon Pâris. Many persons, born humpbacked and otherwise distorted, left the tomb walking erect, and with vivacity more than usual.

As the celebrity of the tomb increased, the concourse of the sick, the lame, the halt, the blind, and the dumb became such as to incommode the neighborhood. The whole cemetery and the neighboring streets were crowded with women and men of all ages, afflicted with all maladies. Here were seen men writhing upon the ground in epileptic fits; there were others in a kind of convulsive ecstasy, swallowing pebbles, earth, pieces of glass, and even burning coals! Yonder were women beside themselves, standing upon their heads, while other women, prostrate upon the earth, called upon the by-standers to relieve their agony by striking them heavy blows upon the body. Some women danced, others leaped into the air, others twisted their bodies in a thousand extravagant ways, others assumed postures designed to represent scenes of the Passion. Some of them sang; others groaned, grunted, barked, mewed, hissed, declaimed, prophesied. The dancing, conducted by a priest, was the favorite exercise, and many of the lame, it is said, who had not stood upon their feet for years, found themselves able to join in it with great activity.

Scenes of this nature were daily exhibited in the cemetery

for the space of five years. At the end of that period the extravagance had risen to such a height that both the church and the kingdom were scandalized by it. The king then interfered, and published an edict, which ordered the cemetery to be closed, and forbade assemblages of people in the neighborhood. The morning after this edict appeared, one of the wits of Paris wrote upon the gate of the cemetery the well-known epigram, "BY ORDER OF THE KING: God is forbidden to perform miracles in this place."

But the madness continued. The earth of the cemetery and the water of a well near by were conveyed to private apartments, and there the miracles were renewed. In all the history of human folly there is nothing so extravagant as the scenes which now occurred. It became the mode for the sick to fall into the most violent convulsions, during which they were subjected to treatment still more violent. One or two examples out of a thousand will suffice. A young girl of seventeen, afflicted with a chronic disease, was laid upon the floor. Twenty-three grown persons placed one of their feet upon her body, and pressed with all their force upon it, — an operation which, as she said, gave her the most exquisite delight, and effected a total cure. Other women, stretched upon the floor in convulsions, were beaten with an oaken club on every part of the body, and with all the force of a strong man, to their great joy and lasting relief. A witness swears that he saw one poor woman receive, without harm, two thousand blows, any one of which would have felled an ox. Other witnesses testify that five strong men endeavored to thrust a sword into the body of one of the convulsed, but could not. Sometimes swords were thrust into the body, but the wound immediately healed without leaving a scar. One woman received, in one night, thirty thousand blows of the fist from relays of strong men; another was beaten for fifty-five minutes with a huge oaken club, at the rate of thirty blows a minute, without incurring the slightest harm. All of which is supported by a superabundance of sworn, positive, and detailed testimony from persons of repute.

The climax of this impious and wonderful folly was reached when they began to parody the crucifixion. The following account of one of these scenes rests upon an amount of evidence

which would convict a man of murder before any of our courts. If the jury believed one half of the witnesses, they would be compelled to convict. A woman called Sister Frances, aged fifty-five, who had been subject to convulsions for twenty-seven years, was crucified three times. On the last occasion, the ceremony began at seven o'clock in the morning by stretching her upon a cross in the ordinary form, laid upon the floor. A priest drove a nail through the palm of her left hand into the wood of the cross, and then let her alone for two minutes. Then, pouring a little water upon the right hand, he nailed that to the cross. The woman, who was in a convulsion, appeared to suffer severely, though she neither sighed nor groaned; her flushed face alone indicating anguish. Thus she remained for twenty-eight minutes (these chroniclers are very exact), at the end of which time they nailed her two feet to a shelf upon the cross. The nails, we are informed, were square in shape, and six inches long. No blood flowed from any of these wounds, except a very little from one of her feet.

Having thus completed the nailing, they let her remain fifteen minutes longer, and then gradually raised one end of the cross, supporting it first upon a chair, and finally leaning it against the wall. Here it was allowed to remain for half an hour, during which they read a chapter from the Gospel of St. John, which the woman appeared to understand and enjoy. Next they placed upon her head a crown of sharp iron wires, to represent the crown of thorns. She was nailed to the cross for three hours, and then the nails were gradually drawn out, which appeared to cause much suffering. "One of the nails," says the narrator, "*I put in my pocket, and I have it now.*" The hands of the woman bled profusely, but when they had been washed with a little water, she rose, warmly embraced one of her friends, and appeared to have undergone little injury. The wounds were rubbed with a small cross, which had been sanctified at the tomb of Deacon Pâris, and they immediately closed. This story is related at such length, and is supported by such a number of affidavits, that it occupies nearly one hundred folio pages.¹

Both the brothers Arouet, I repeat, witnessed these events.

¹ Histoire des Miraculés et des Convulsionnaires de Saint-Médard, par P. F. Mathieu. Paris, 1864.

The impression they made upon the mind of Voltaire is revealed to us in several of his works. He burlesques them in "La Pucelle;" he gravely describes them in his histories; he alludes to them in his letters; and in all he regards them with as much respect as we do the hideous and fantastic tricks by which the Indian and the African medicine men impose upon the credulity of their tribes. Armand, on the contrary, beheld them with abject faith. He compiled a collection of the miracles, which his brother inherited and kept all his life, and which is said still to exist at Petersburg, with the rest of the Voltaire manuscripts bought by Catherine II. He delighted to attest the miracles both as notary and as man. Among the great number of affidavits appended to the case of Madeleine Durand, a young girl miraculously cured of a "frightful cancer in the mouth," is one by Armand Arouet. This dreadful cancer, we are assured by the historian of the miracles, Carré de Montgeron, only began in the mouth, and gradually infected all the blood, wasted the body to a skeleton, distorted the face out of all knowledge, and corrupted the air to a distance of ten paces. Armand Arouet swore to the effect following:—

"I have seen her often fall in convulsions; and then she seemed to be quite out of her senses, conscious of nothing that passed in her presence. Possessed by various sentiments that sprung up in her mind, she gave expression to them in short and most fervent prayers. In those same convulsions I have seen her throw herself down, and strike the floor again and again with her cancer very hard, and rub it against the tiles with all her might. Sometimes she begged one of the persons present to put his hands upon her left cheek and lean upon it with all his weight, the cancer being in contact with the floor. I have seen her cut off a piece of her cancer with a pair of scissors. Her blood then flowed abundantly, but as soon as she poured some water from the well near the tomb of M. Pâris upon the wound, at that very instant the blood was stanch'd. I saw that but once, but I know that a great number of persons will render the same testimony, who have also seen it. Having learned that the most skillful surgeons of Orleans, where this convulsionist was born, had pronounced her malady incurable, and as their opinion was confirmed by that of the most celebrated surgeons of Paris, I ceased to visit her assiduously, and awaited the event. At the beginning of 1735 I saw her perfectly cured, and have seen her several times since; to-day, also (this June 8, 1736), she

has been presented to me. The convulsions following immediately upon the invocation of the Blessed One [*le Bienheureux*, meaning Pâris], as I have myself witnessed; her cancer having disappeared totally, without leaving upon her cheek, inside or outside, any mark of iron or fire; the perfect health which she now enjoys, — all convinces me that we can assign a cure so miraculous to no other agent than God.”

Thus Armand Arouet, brother of Voltaire!

The brothers probably conversed together upon the convulsionist miracles; and perhaps Voltaire had Armand in his mind when he wrote, many years after, in the “Philosophical Dictionary,” article “Fanaticism:” “When once fanaticism has gangrened a brain, the malady is almost incurable. I have seen convulsionists who, in speaking of the miracles of Saint Pâris, grew warm by degrees; their eyes flashed fire; their whole body trembled; their fury distorted their countenances; and they would have killed any one who had contradicted them. Yes; I have seen those convulsionists. I have seen them twist their limbs and foam at the mouth. They cried, ‘We must have blood!’”

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE TENDER "ZAÏRE."

IT was from a mansion near the Palais-Royal that Voltaire surveyed life at this period. Not his own mansion, of course. Since his return from England, in March, 1729, until near the close of 1731, he had had no fixed abode; but soon after coming from his hiding-place near Rouen he found luxurious quarters in the hotel of the Countess de Fontaine-Martel, a merry old widow, with a well appointed house, forty thousand francs a year, and the easy morals of a Ninon de Lenclos. Being at this time "past love, through age and erysipelas," she gave a nightly supper to the amusing people of the day, among whom, if we may judge of the specimens of her talk reported by Voltaire, she surpassed Ninon herself in the license which she allowed her tongue. It would be hard to decide which were farther from the right way, — this witty and audacious old countess, or the serious women who groveled at the tomb of Deacon Pâris.

From being a frequent guest at her suppers, Voltaire at length yielded to her desire that he should occupy rooms in her house; and there, during the brief remainder of her life, he lived and reigned, as though he had been the natural lord of the mansion. As he himself remarked, it was precisely as if he had been the master of a magnificent hotel and forty thousand francs a year. He presided at her suppers; he conducted her private theatricals; he tried his plays upon her stage; he enjoyed her box at the opera; he used her coach; he rode upon her horses, — and paid for all by an epistle or two in verse, which fill two or three pages of a volume, and preserve her name. A lucky old reprobate she was to have such an inmate. From one of these epistles posterity learns that "Martel" was the exact opposite of a saint of the kind then in vogue; since she preferred long, merry, and tranquil suppers

to pious vigils, and chose Voltaire for the director of her conscience instead of a Jansenist priest. "In her abode reigned LIBERTY, decent, tolerant, and serene, conjointly with her sister GAYETY, never bitter in her satire, neither prudish nor dissolute."

The epistle does not quite accord with prosaic accounts of the lady's character or manners. In a letter written in 1767, Voltaire himself gives a taste of her: "No more tragedies from me. . . . I console myself in forming young people. Madame de Fontaine-Martel used to say that when one had the misfortune to be no longer . . . it was necessary to be procuress." The lady, however, used the simpler language of the tap-room.

In her hotel was first performed his new tragedy of "Ériphile," where it received the applause bestowed upon drawing-room theatricals. Fourteen years had now elapsed since the production of "Œdipe," and never since had the author tasted the sweet delirium of an unequivocal dramatic triumph. Total failures had alternated with successes of esteem, which tantalize, not satisfy; and the growing popularity of "Charles XII." seems but to have provoked his desire to prove himself equal to works more difficult. Unfriendly critics, too, began to taunt and disparage; the modern reviewer was developing; literary periodicals were acquiring vogue and power; and this author began now to experience the bondage of a great and dazzling celebrity. What could be esteemed literary glory in Paris compared with dramatic success? A truly excellent acting-play will perhaps forever remain the supreme product of human genius, as it is also the one which gives the greatest rapture to the greatest number. In France, a genuine dramatic success was then very much what it now is; and our susceptible poet evidently felt that his other glories only made this supreme glory the more necessary to him. His letters show how ardently he strove to perfect his "Ériphile, Queen of Argos;" correcting, changing, rewriting, reading it to friends, and, finally, trying it upon a private stage. The play slightly resembles "Hamlet" in its plot, and he ventured to introduce the ghost of a murdered king upon the stage, who appears in a temple, and there calls solemnly upon his son to avenge his death. The queen,

too, was a party consenting to the murder, and in a few other particulars we are reminded of "Hamlet." Voltaire had high hopes of his ghost, remembering, doubtless, the thrill and awful hush which the appearance of Hamlet's ghost never failed to cause in London, even when not well played. He dared not attempt a long scene of the kind, but showed his ghost only for a few moments, in the fourth act, just as the guilty pair were about to enter the temple to be married. The temple opens; the ghost is revealed in a menacing posture. The guilty mother, her paramour, and the innocent son stand appalled.

GHOST. — "Hold, wretch!"

QUEEN. — "My husband's self! Where am I?"

SON. — "Dread spirit, what god causes thee to leave the infernal shades? What is the blood that flows from thee? And what art thou?"

GHOST. — "Thy king! If thou aspirest to reign, stop, obey me."

SON. — "I will. My arm is ready. What must I do?"

GHOST. — "Avenge me upon my tomb."

SON. — "Upon whom?"

GHOST. — "Upon thy mother."

SON. — "My mother? What dost thou say? O uncertain oracle! But hell withdraws him from my distracted gaze. The gods shut their temple."

The edifice then closes, and the ghost is no more seen.

"Ériphile" was not successful. The poor ghost had to be exhibited upon a stage half filled with Paris dandies, and could not succeed in appalling either them or the more distant spectators. The piece was not absolutely damned, but it did not interest, and it was soon withdrawn. The author rewrote three acts, and prefixed a very taking prologue. The prologue was a hit, but the play still going heavily he withdrew it from the theatre and, finally, even from the printer; and, years after, as his manner was, used some of the material and some of the verses in his tragedy of "Sémiramis."

Friends interposed their advice on this occasion. The baffled author in old age used to speak of a certain supper at Madame de Tencin's, where Fontenelle and other persons of note in literature joined in friendly remonstrance against his persisting further in a career for which he was evidently not

made. One success, two failures, two escapes! Thus the account stood so far; and who could say how much of the brilliant success of "Œdipe" was due to Sophocles, how much to accident, how much to Voltaire? La Harpe once asked him what reply he made to the remarks of his friends at Madame de Tencin's. "None," said he; "but I brought out 'Zaïre.'" ¹

"Zaïre" was a new and captivating subject, suggested perhaps by Shakespeare's "Othello," as "Ériphile" seems a faint reminiscence of "Hamlet." He dashed at it with amazing impetuosity, as if inspired by failure. During his late residence at Rouen he had renewed his school-boy intimacy with Cideville and Formont, who retained in maturity the love of literature which they had imbibed at the Collège Louis-le-Grand. He made them now his literary confidants, and they in return gave him plenty of advice, and sometimes came from Rouen to Paris to witness the performance of his plays. He wrote tumultuous letters to these sympathizing friends this summer; sometimes to one, sometimes to both at once. It is in such letters as these that we see both the mode and the motive of his labors. Here is the history of the new tragedy in a few sentences from them:—

[To Cideville, May 29th.] "I have corrected in 'Ériphile' all the faults which we remarked. Scarcely was this task finished, when, in order to be able to review my work with less self-love, and to give myself time to forget it, I began another, and I have taken a firm resolution not to cast my eyes upon 'Ériphile' until the new tragedy is done. This play will be made for the heart, as much as 'Eriphile' was for the imagination. The scene is to be laid in a very singular place, and the action will pass between Turks and Christians. I shall depict their manners to the utmost of my ability, and I shall try to throw into the work all that the Christian religion has of most pathetic and most interesting, and all that love knows of most tender and cruel. Here is work for six months."

[To Formont, on the same day.] "Every one here reproaches me that I do not put more love into my pieces. There shall be love enough this time I swear to you, and not gallantry either. My desire is that there may be nothing so Turkish, so Christian, so amorous, so tender, so infuriate, as that which I am now putting into verse for the pleasure of the public. I have the honor already to have done an

¹ 9 Cours de Littérature, 139.

act of it. Either I am much deceived, or this will be the most peculiar piece we have upon our stage. The names of Montmorenci, of Saint Louis, of Saladin, of Jesus, of Mahomet, will be in it. There will be mention of the Seine and of Jordan, of Paris and of Jerusalem. We shall love, we shall baptize, we shall kill, and I will send you the outline as soon as it is done. . . . Don't ask me for news of the parliament. I know, and wish to know, only *les belles-lettres*."

[To Formont, June 25th.] "Hearty thanks, my dear friend, for the good advice you give me upon the plan of a tragedy; but it came too late. The tragedy was done. It cost me but twenty-two days. Never have I worked with such swiftness. The subject drew me on, and the piece made itself. . . . At present I am having it copied; as soon as I have a copy ready, it shall start for Rouen, and go to Messieurs de Formont and Cideville. Scarcely had I written the last verse of my Turco-Christian piece than I took up 'Eriphile' again."

[To Cideville, June 27th.] "A man just finishing a new tragedy has not time to write long letters, my amiable Cideville; but every scene of the piece was a letter which I wrote to you, and I said to myself continually, 'Will my tender and susceptible friend Cideville approve this situation or this sentiment? Shall I make him shed tears?' At length, after having rapidly written my work, in order the sooner to send it to you, I read it to the actors."

[August 25th. To both.] "My dear and amiable critics, I wish that you could be witnesses of the success of 'Zaïre;' you would see that your advice was not useless, and that there was very little of it which I did not profit by. Permit me, my dear Cideville, to express to you freely the pleasure I enjoy in seeing the success of a work which you approved. My satisfaction augments in communicating it to you. Never piece was so well played as 'Zaïre' at the fourth representation. I wished you there; you would have seen that the public did not hate your friend. I appeared in a box, and the whole pit clapped me. I blushed, I hid myself; but I should be a hypocrite if I did not confess to you that I was sensibly touched. It is sweet not to be without honor in one's own country: I am sure you will love me the more for the avowal. But, messieurs, send me back 'Ériphile,' which I cannot do without, and which is going to be played at Fontainebleau. *Mon Dieu!* what a thing it is to choose an interesting subject! 'Ériphile' is far better written than 'Zaïre;' but all the ornaments, all the spirit and all the force of poetry are not worth (so people say) one touch of sentiment."

✓ The new tragedy had indeed all the success which a play can have with the play-going public. On the first night,

August 13, 1732, the pit, it is true, was a little refractory at times: now tittering at a hasty verse; now half inclined to rebel against innovation; now almost laughing at an effect that missed fire. Colley Cibber records an anecdote of this stormy first night, related to him by an English barrister who was present. During the delivery of a soliloquy by Mademoiselle Gaussin, the Englishman was seized with such a violent fit of coughing as to compel the lady to pause for several seconds, which drew upon him the eyes of the whole audience. A French gentleman, sitting near, leaned over and asked him if Mademoiselle Gaussin had given him any particular offense, since he took so public an occasion to resent it. The cougher protested that he admired the actress too much to disoblige her in any way, and would rather leave the theatre than disturb her again.¹

Audiences then, according to Cibber, were inclined to be despotic, and were most prompt to resent the slightest departure from usage, whether before or behind the foot-lights. He says that he saw a play at the Théâtre Français interrupted for several minutes by the audience crying *Place à la dame!* to a gentleman in the second tier, who was sitting in front of the box, so as to obscure the view of a lady behind him.

For a short time the fate of the tender "Zaïre" was in doubt before that turbulent and tyrannical tribunal, the *parterre*. But the pathos of the chief scenes subdued all hearts at length. The author on the following days removed the more obvious blemishes, and "Zaïre" took its place as a public favorite, which it retains to this day. After a first run of nine nights, the summer season closed; but, being resumed in the autumn, it had twenty-one representations, and continued to be reproduced from time to time. It was performed before the king and queen at Fontainebleau; it was translated into English, and given with applause in London; and, finally, being published "with privilege," was spread abroad over Europe. He dedicated the printed edition to his English friend, Falkener, thus: "To M. Falkener, English merchant; since ambassador at Constantinople." He added, as was his wont, a dedicatory epistle, in mingled prose and verse, in

¹ Cibber's Apology, London, 1740, page 482.

which he said various things that he wished his own countrymen to consider :—

"You are an Englishman, my dear friend, and I was born in France; but those who love the arts are all fellow-citizens. Honest people who think have very much the same principles, and compose but one republic. . . . I offer, then, this tragedy to you as my countryman in literature and as my intimate friend. At the same time, I take pleasure in being able to say to my own nation in what estimation merchants are held among you; how much respect is felt for a profession which makes the greatness of the state, and with what superiority some of you represent their country in parliament. I know well that this profession is despised by our *petits-mâtres*; but you know also that our *petits-mâtres* and yours are the most ridiculous species that creep with pride upon the surface of the earth."

He extols again, above all things else, the happy liberty of thought enjoyed in England, which, he says, communicated itself to his own mind whenever he associated with Englishmen. "My ideas are bolder when I am with you."

This was truly the case, as was shown by the two plays, "Eriphile" and "Zaïre," both of which were written with a certain new audacity and spirit, derived, in part, from Shakespeare. Zaïre was a Christian captive in Jerusalem, reared in ignorance of her faith and country, and beloved by the Soudan, the Mahometan ruler of the region. She warmly returned his passion; and the play opens near the hour fixed for their union. But on that fatal day she discovers her origin, meets her aged father just released from long imprisonment, meets her brother coming to ransom Christian captives, and thus finds herself in the clutch of passions as irreconcilable as tigers in presence of one stray white lamb. On one side, religion, loyalty, natural affection, and pride of race; on the other, a deep and tender love at the hour of fruition, and a lover all fire and jealousy. The tender lamb, of course, is torn in pieces. The Soudan, mistaking the brother for a lover, and a baptismal rendezvous for a rendezvous of love, kills her; and then, discovering his error, kills himself.

Forget "Othello;" come to "Zaïre" by the road of the ancient classic drama of France, and you find it a powerful and affecting work, with many a passage of genuine force and

beauty ; the whole performance announcing the deliverance of the French stage from the bondage of its ancient rules and unities. The subject was a happy one for an author born to exhibit the nothingness of those theological differences which made men willing to tear out one another's vitals. "On the banks of the Ganges," says the innocent, bewildered Zaïre, "I had been a devotee of false gods ; in Paris, a Christian ; here, a Mahometan. Instruction does all ; the hand of our fathers engraves upon our feeble hearts those first characters which time and example retrace." And again, speaking of her lover : "Can God hate a heart so magnanimous ? Generous, beneficent, just, full of excellent qualities, if he had been born a Christian, what would he have been more ?" The Mahometan chief speaks, in his turn, of the wonder and indignation he had felt on finding himself equaled in virtue by a Christian !

Tragedy, comedy, farce, poem, history, romance, — whatever might be the name and plumage of the pigeon which Voltaire loosed in his author's life of sixty years, the message under its wings was sure to be such as these words convey.

But, in "Zaïre," he was fortunate, as an author competing for public favor, in having opportunities to give eloquent expression also to the feeling which inspired the crusades ; and thus he gave pleasure in the same play, and sometimes in the same passage, to the philosophers and to the Christians. "Great by his valor, greater by his *faith*," is a sentiment which a French girls' boarding-school would, perhaps, still applaud. There is also a magnificent burst of religious feeling in the second act, where the aged father of Zaïre appeals to the sacred objects and places near Jerusalem, to rouse in his daughter the dormant Christian sentiment. "Thy God whom thou betrayest, thy God whom thou blasphemest, died for thee, died for the universe, amid *these* scenes. Turn thine eyes ; his tomb is near this palace. Here is the Mount whereon, to wash away our sins, he was willing to die under the wounds of impious men. Yonder is the place where he returned to life from the grave. In this august region thou canst not take one step without finding thy God !"

The success of "Zaïre" gave its impetuous author no rest, no pause ; for it was his habit not only to correct ceaselessly

his past works, but to have several new ones in progress at the same time. In the interval of the summer holidays we see him "reworking 'Zaïre' as though it had been a failure," recasting "Julius Cæsar" and "Ériphile," correcting "Charles XII." for a new Holland edition, replying at much length to a pamphlet calling in question some of its statements, adding important things to his English Letters, meditating a new play, accumulating material for his "History of Louis XIV.," and writing long letters, with sprightly and graceful verses interspersed. "How much toil and trouble," he writes to Formont in September, 1732, "for this smoke of vainglory! Nevertheless, what should we do without that chimera? It is as necessary to the soul as food is to the body. I have made 'Ériphile' and 'Cæsar' all over again; and all for that smoke."

In October he was at Fontainebleau, where he spent six weeks, superintending the performance before the court of old plays and new, — "Zaïre" and "Mariamne" among them, — and in rewriting his chapter upon Newton and Gravitation for the English Letters, getting important aid from his friend and mathematician, Maupertuis. In the midst of his court life we discover him corresponding with Maupertuis upon the Newtonian philosophy; which was so little known in France, and so lightly regarded, that he began to doubt whether it could be all that the English claimed for it. "A frightful scruple comes to me," he writes, "and all my faith is shaken." But Maupertuis completely reassured him. "Burn my ridiculous objections," Voltaire rejoins; and he goes on with his Newtonian chapter without fear. Who that saw him about the palace at this time could have suspected such a correspondence! "The whole court," he writes to a young lady, while he was puzzling over Newton, "has been in combustion for three or four days with regard to a bad comedy which I kept from being played. . . . Two parties were formed: one, including the queen and her ladies; the other, the princesses and their adherents. The queen was victorious, and I made peace with the princesses. This important affair cost me but a few trifling, mediocre verses, which, however, were deemed very good by those to whom they were addressed; for there is no goddess whose nose the odor of incense does not regale."

We have a glimpse of him during this residence at court from a satirical letter of Alexis Piron, who was also a courtier for the moment. Piron had not yet recovered from the delusion which comic writers, as well as comic actors, frequently cherish, that nature meant him for the tragic drama. One of his tragedies, entitled "Gustave," he had offered to the actors, and may have had it with him at Fontainebleau. He could not, in early life, contemplate Voltaire's tragic triumphs with unalloyed satisfaction. This too brief description of court scenes is in his good comedy vein:—

"I should be much bored at court [he writes to the Abbé Legendre], but for a window corner in the gallery, where, opera-glass in hand, I post myself for some hours; and God knows the pleasure I have in seeing the goers and comers. Ah, the masks! If you should see what an edifying aspect people of your garb have! what an important air the courtiers! how the rest are changed by fear and hope! and, especially, how false those airs, for the most part, are to discerning eyes! It is a marvel. I see nothing genuine here but the faces of the Swiss guards, the only philosophers of the court. With their halberds upon their shoulders, their big mustaches, and their tranquil air, one would say that they regarded all these hungry fortune-hunters as people who are running after what they, poor Swiss as they are, obtained long ago. Speaking of that, it was with a sufficiently Swiss expression that I watched, very much at my ease, yesterday, Voltaire, bustling about like a little green pea among the crowds of foolish people who amused me. When he saw me, —

"Ah, good day, my dear Piron. What are you at court for? I have been here these three weeks. They played my "Mariamne" the other day, and they are going to play "Zaïre." When "Gustave"? How are you? Ah, Monsieur Duke, one word. I was looking for you."

"He said that all in a breath; I was unable to get in a word. So, this morning, having met him again, I said at once, —

"Very well, thank you, sir."

"He did not know what I meant until I told him he had left me the evening before asking me how I was, and I had not been able to answer him sooner."

The sage Piron does not tell us how Voltaire extricated himself on this occasion. Late in the year the author of "Zaïre" returned to Paris, and spent the winter at the hotel of his aged countess, in that tumult of work and pleasure, of literature

and speculation, which made up his life at the capital. Early in January, 1733, there was a memorable evening at Madame de Fontaine-Martel's, when "Zaïre" was performed in the *salon*, the author himself playing the part of Lusignan, the aged and dying father of the heroine. "I drew tears from beautiful eyes," he wrote to Formont. Almost every day there was a festival of some kind at this hotel, — a festival, too, the chief design of which was to amuse Voltaire. There were charades, games, forfeits, feats of rhyming, cards, music, comedy, tragedy, *divertissement*, — all the gayeties in vogue. High play, too, sometimes; for this thriving poet mentions losing there twelve thousand francs in one evening.

Suddenly, in January, 1733, the gay, distracting life came to an end. Death knocked at the door. The aged countess fell dangerously sick, suffered a few days, and died. Her death, it must be confessed, was not "edifying," and Voltaire's account of it not more so. "What o'clock is it?" asked the dying woman. Without waiting to be told, she added, "Blessed be God, whatever the hour may be, there is somewhere a rendezvous!"¹

He gave other particulars, not less astounding, in a letter to Formont, just after the funeral: —

"I owe an answer to your charming epistle [in prose and verse], but the illness of our baroness suspended all our double rhymes. I did not believe, eight days ago, that the first verses I should have to compose for her would be her epitaph. I cannot conceive how I bore all the burdens that have overwhelmed me these fifteen days past. On the one hand, they seized an edition of 'Zaïre;' on the other, the baroness was dying. I had to go and solicit the Keeper of the Seals, and, at the same time, to seek the viatica. At night I was in attendance upon the patient, and all day I was occupied with the details of the house. Imagine it: it was I who announced to the poor woman that she had to set out [*partir*]. She was unwilling to hear the last ceremonies spoken of; but I was obliged in honor to make her die in the rules. I brought her a priest, half Jansenist, half politician, who made believe confess her, and afterwards gave her the rest. When this comedian of St. Eustache asked her aloud if she was not firmly persuaded that her God, her Creator, was in the Eucharist, she answered, *Ah, yes!* in a tone that would have made me burst out laughing, in circumstances less doleful."

¹ Voltaire to Richelieu, July 19, 1769.

And this countess had a daughter who was a Jansenist, and doubtless believed in the miracles of the blessed Pâris! Such was the dislocation of society then! Voltaire speaks of writing madame's epitaph. He did so, with perfect sincerity, in the first sentence of a letter to Cideville, written on the same day: "I have lost, as perhaps you know, Madame de Fontaine-Martel. That is to say, I have lost a good house of which I was the master, and forty thousand francs of revenue which was spent in diverting me."

It was necessary to dislodge, though he lingered three months longer in the "good house" of the departed. His next abode was a change of scene such as we see in a pantomime. From the airy and brilliant neighborhood of the Palais-Royal, he went to live, in May, 1733, at the house of his man of business, Demoulin, in a dingy and obscure lane, called then Rue de Longpont, now Rue Jacques-de-Brosse. Opposite the house was the fine portico of the church of St. Gervail, the bells of which, it appears, disturbed his repose. He told his friend Cideville that his new home was in the ugliest house of the ugliest quarter of Paris, and that he was more deafened in it by the noise of the bells than a sexton. "But," he added, "I shall make so much noise with my lyre that the sound of the bells will be nothing for me." Madame Demoulin served as housekeeper to all the inmates, and the merchant-poet was attended by a valet and an amanuensis.

He usually had with him a fledgeling poet or two, whose talents he encouraged,—with the usual result of total disappointment. The talents that move the world are apt to be discouraged, until they no longer need encouragement. Two poets, Lefèvre and Linant, were with him at this period. Lefèvre died in the flower of his days; but Linant, who possessed, as Voltaire remarks, all the virtues becoming a man of fortune, but not those that help a man to win fortune, clung to him long, and plagued him much by his unconquerable indolence. By the middle of May, 1733, Voltaire was settled in his new quarters, with his retainers, his *protégés*, and his projects, literary and commercial. "I come here," he wrote to Cideville, while he was moving, "to lead a philosophic life, the plan of which I have long had in my head, and never carried out."

He and his man of business were deeper than ever in commerce now, importing grain from Mediterranean ports, and bringing into France the rich products of Spain and Portugal. He was greatly interested, in 1733, in a project for making straw paper, an invention reserved for a later day. Many of his letters on this subject exist in manuscript, not yet accessible.¹ A more profitable enterprise than any of these was looming up this spring. The war to replace Stanislas upon the throne of Poland began this year, and Paris-Duverney returned with his brothers to their old trade of feeding the troops. He invited and advised Voltaire to take a share in the contract; and who could do the work better than one accustomed to import grain from the chief sources of supply? The contractors agreed to place provisions wherever needed at a fixed sum per ration (say, sixty sous); and hence, in an easy, languid, political war like this, an inordinate profit might be realized. In the course of two or three mild campaigns, Voltaire's share of the proceeds of the contract amounted to six hundred thousand francs;² and this without interrupting his career, and while he seemed wholly the man of letters.

It is not often that the same hand supplies an army with biscuit and with laurel. Among the minor poems of our contractor is one, in the poet-laureate style, celebrating the Italian campaign of 1734, for which campaign he assisted to furnish supplies. If the biscuit and the beef which he sent to the army of Italy were no better than the poem with which he regaled it, his soldiers would have given the contractor a sorry welcome if he had ventured into camp. Yet he put his own name to his sham poem, while using that of Demoulin for his honest business.

¹ *Jeunesse de Voltaire*, page 480.

² *Mémoires*, par S. G. Louchamp, article 34.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE ENGLISH LETTERS PUBLISHED.

BUT he could not live in Paris. He never could, long at a time. One would have thought that now his position was something more than merely secure in his native city; since, to a great and growing celebrity, he had taken the precaution to add a great and growing fortune.

He was forty years of age; fifteen years had passed since the production of "Œdipe," and he had a widening circle of "admirers," as well among the few who seek knowledge from the books they read as among the many who seek pleasure. The Marquise du Châtelet speaks of having known "La Henriade" by heart before she saw the author's face in 1733. In distant lands, men open to liberal ideas were reading his works with that silent gratitude with which we have hailed the succession of free spirits who have made our own generation memorable. We have been blessed with many such; but, in 1733 and later, Voltaire was the only conspicuous author on the Continent who wrote in the new spirit. Frederic, Prince Royal of Prussia, who came of age in 1733, was, we may be sure, not the only young man in Germany who scanned the horizon for the first sign of something new from Voltaire, and counted the days till he received his copy. In England he was, at least, a bookseller's favorite, for there was "money in him." Rival editions of "Charles XII.," a *Henriade* in English verse, two in French verse, three thousand copies of the *English Letters* printed for the first edition, a "*Zaïre*" in French for readers, a "*Zaïre*" in English on the stage, and all these running in 1732 and 1733, attest the commercial value of his reputation in England. Amsterdam had given Europe two editions of his collected works: one, a small duodecimo, in 1728; another, in two volumes octavo, in 1732.¹

¹ *Bibliographie Voltairienne*, page 92.

But he could not live in Paris, notwithstanding.

There was a vacancy in the French Academy, in December, 1731, by the death of Lamotte, one of the Forty; that Academy which, as Voltaire himself tells us, was — as it now is — the darling object of desire to men of letters in France. The great Richelieu, who founded the Academy, would have given the vacant chair to the author of “Charles XII.,” “*Œdipe*,” “*Zaïre*,” and “*La Henriade*.” Voltaire may have been of that opinion, and appears to have had a momentary expectation of receiving the king’s nomination. But, early in 1732, by some unknown chance or treachery was published that deistical poem, the “*Epistle to Uranie*,” written by him ten years before for Madame de Rupelmonde, his traveling companion on the journey to Holland. It was published, too, with the name of the author. “What do you think of it?” asked the austere chancellor of France, D’Aguesseau, of his secretary, Langlois. “Monseigneur,” replied the secretary, “Voltaire ought to be shut up in a place where he could have neither pen, ink, nor paper. That man, by the bent of his mind, can destroy a state.”¹ The Archbishop of Paris complained formally to the lieutenant of police, Hérault, so often obliged to concern himself with a troublesome poet. The lieutenant summoned the culprit to his cabinet. Voltaire parried this grave danger by the expedient employed by Sir Walter Scott, whenever he was cornered touching the authorship of “*Waverley*.” He plumply denied having written it. It was the work, he added, of the late Abbé de Chaulieu; he had heard the abbé recite it; and, indeed, in the volume of Chaulieu’s works, collected by Thieriot, there are several poems expressing similar sentiments. The lieutenant, who may have seen “*Zaïre*” the evening before, was polite enough to pretend to believe this, and the poet retained his liberty. During Lent several orthodox poets tried their skill in replying to the obnoxious epistle in the “*Mercure*,” but without eliciting response from the abbé.

The tender “*Zaïre*” was the innocent occasion of a more noisy and lasting, if less perilous commotion. J. B. Rousseau, still in unjust, dependent exile at sixty-three, had lost much of

¹ *Paroles Mémorables*, par G. Brottier, page 303. Quoted in *Jeunesse de Voltaire*, page 459.

his poetic power, without gaining in good temper. He heard of Voltaire's successes with the jealousy of a narrow mind soured by age and misfortune. He had written of Voltaire, in 1731, in a letter designed to be handed about Paris, in a style of affected contempt, as "a young man who imposed upon others by his effrontery, but produced nothing that posterity would take as true metal,"—a too obvious reminiscence of Voltaire's jest upon Rousseau's "Ode to Posterity." He spoke contemptuously of his plays as a string of fragments devoid of connection and of sense, improbable and unnatural, with here and there a few verses not wanting in spirit, but very irregular and inharmonious. "Add to that," wrote Rousseau, "a proud ignorance which disdains to be informed, a vanity that revolts, and an audacity in setting up rules intolerable in an author who neither recognizes nor knows any rule." All of which was ill-natured and unjust; but there was no savor of the Bastille in it, and no scent of the fagot. "Zaïre" was produced, and gave Voltaire rank as the tragic poet of the time. Rousseau received from his correspondent in Paris a copy of the tragedy, and with it some rumor of a composition by Voltaire called the "Temple du Goût,"—a piece of fun then in manuscript, in which Rousseau, among other poets, was burlesqued. The exile wrote in reply a long letter, which also was meant to circulate where it could do most harm:—

"The piece [Zaïre] which you sent me has arrived at last. Those who told me, four months ago, that the subtle design of the work was to prove Saracens better people than Christians gave me an erroneous idea of it; for it does not appear that the author had that design in view. The sentiment which reigns in it tends simply to show that all the efforts of Grace have no power over the passions. This impious dogma, not less hostile to good sense than to religion, is the sole basis of his plot. . . . He must have a bad opinion of his auditory to suppose that the picture of frenzied concupiscence in a *Christian* piece, wherein a crucified God is spoken of, and the ineffable mysteries of the faith, would appear more touching than the miraculous effects of divine mercy."

He continues to denounce the play at inordinate length, styling it "an odious *mélange* of piety and libertinage," a "monstrous tragedy," "trivial and flat," which would revolt

all honest readers. He contrasts with "Zaire" the pious tragedies of Racine and Corneille, so much admired at boarding-school exhibitions and convent festivals. He concludes his letter thus:—

"As to what you tell me of Voltaire's recriminations, I foresaw that your complaisance in permitting a copy to be taken of what I wrote to you upon this little author would call out something of the kind from him. But it gives me very little concern. He is a man of no consequence, who can build all the *Temples* he pleases without fear of my taking the hammer to work at their demolition. I esteem his architecture no more than I do his poetry. Nevertheless, although I have no desire to measure myself with such an adversary, I am not sorry that the public is informed of the reasons for his attacking me; and to that end the extracts can serve which you allowed to be taken of what I wrote to you on this subject."

Voltaire was transported with fury by this unprovoked and perilous attack. A man of his constitution, worn always by intense mental toil, and regulating his system more by medicine than by regimen, may become irritable to an inconceivable degree. But there were two peculiarities in his case: he could retain his anger a long time; and, the moment he took pen in hand, he could perfectly control it. Poor Rousseau exhibited his malevolence in every line; but Voltaire never seems more light of heart, more at peace with all the world, more free from everything like rancor, than in this "Temple of Taste," written chiefly, perhaps, to "get even with" J. B. Rousseau. No cat was ever more playful while a mouse was fluttering away its little life between her velvet paws. It was a piece of twenty-five or thirty printed pages, of verse and prose intermingled: chatty, critical, satirical, eulogistic, — everything by turns, and nothing long. It was such free and easy discourse upon men, things, and books, living and dead, ancient and recent, as might be supposed to fall from the poet's lips after supper, while surrounded only by friends. Fancy such talk printed in the life-time of three fourths of the people mentioned by name! Fancy it so spirited, so elegant, so witty, so brief, and, worst of all, so true, that all the reading world must possess it, must re-read it, must send it to their friends in the country, with fierce censure or chuckling eulogium! Sainte-Beuve truly remarks

that posterity has ratified its judgments; but there was the sting of it.

In a few verses of that graceful, complimentary, audacious badinage of which Voltaire is the sole master, he informs the reader that the Cardinal de Fleury had asked to go with him to the Temple of Taste. They set out together; and this piece is the record of their journey. Every folly of the hour is gayly and good-humoredly hit: "the cloud of commentators who restore passages, and compile big volumes apropos of a word they don't understand;" thoughtless expositors of thought; "connoisseurs of pictures who go into raptures at God the Father in his eternal glory, genteelly painted in the taste of Watteau;" the rage for Italian music; the excessive tasteless ornamentation of the new edifices; editors and reviewers who, "like insects, are only perceived when they sting;" old authors overrated and living authors misconceived. The cardinal and the poet, in the course of their journey, arrive near the entrance of the Temple, where, of course, they meet a throng of candidates for admission; among others, the austere and orthodox Rousseau.

"Another versifier arrives, supported by two little satyrs, and crowned with laurels and with thistles. 'I come,' says he, 'to laugh and have a good time, and to go it like the devil; and I won't go home till morning!' 'Why, what's this I hear?' asks *la Critique*. 'It is I,' said the rhymer. 'I come from Germany to see you. I have taken the spring-time for it, since the young Zephyrs with their warm breath have melted the bark of the waters' [parody of a Rousseau couplet]. The more he spoke this language, the less the door opened. 'What do they take me for, then?' said he. 'For a frog that goes about singing, from the bottom of his little throat, Brekeke, kake, koax, koax, koax?' 'Ah, *bon Dieu!* what horrible jargon!' cried *la Critique*. She could not at first recognize him who expressed himself in this manner. She was informed that it was Rousseau, whose voice the Muses had changed to that of a frog, as a punishment for his spiteful tricks. She opened the door, however, in consideration of his early verses, saying, 'Poets, compose your verses at Paris, and don't go to Germany.' Then, approaching me, she said in a low tone, 'You know him; he was your enemy; and you do him justice. You see his Muse, between the altar and the fagot, handle indifferently the harp of David and the flageolet of Marot. Don't imitate his weakness in rhyming too long. The fruits

of the Permessus are produced only in the spring. Cold and melancholy old age is only made for good sense.'”

Admitted to the Temple, Rousseau turns pale with wrath at meeting there Fontenelle, against whom he had launched so many epigrams. He goes aside to make another epigram, while the aged and beloved Fontenelle “looks upon him with that philosophic compassion which a broad and enlightened spirit cannot help feeling for a man who only knows how to rhyme; and he goes away tranquilly to take his place between Lucretius and Leibnitz.”

Among other applicants for admission to the Temple is a black monk, who announces himself thus: “I am the Reverend Father Albertus Garassus. I preach better than Bourdaloue [court preacher to Louis XIV.], for Bourdaloue never caused any books to be burned; whereas I declaimed with such eloquence against Pierre Bayle, in a little province overflowing with intellect, I so touched my hearers, that six of them burned their Bayles. Never before did eloquence obtain so beautiful a triumph.” To whom *la Critique* replies, “Begone, Brother Garassus! Begone, barbarian! Out of the Temple of Taste! Out of my sight, modern Visigoth, who hast traduced the man of myself inspired!”

The “Temple du Goût” being ready for publication, the author read it to the Keeper of the Seals, who thought it might receive, not merely a tacit permission, but even a royal privilege, since he found nothing in it hostile to the state, to religion, or to morals. But while it was in the hands of the appointed censor, M. Crébillon, lo, it appeared from the press! Such accidents could happen at a time when it was so usual to take copies of poems circulating in drawing-rooms. Once in print, it ran like a prairie fire, and raised a buzzing and stinging storm about the author's ears of unexampled fury. On this occasion he was probably astonished to discover what a terrible weapon he wielded when he used his pen in his bantering manner, of which no translation can give an adequate idea. He had the art of cutting several ways at once, making sentences that had in them various currents of allusion, all exasperating to the victims, all diverting to the reader. It was like fighting with one of those hundred-bladed knives that boys admire in the shop-windows. At a moment when he had just

finished a new tragedy, "Adelaide," and was full of zeal in collecting material for his *opus magnum*, his "Louis XIV.;" at a time when, as he wrote to Thieriot, he was "exhausting and killing himself in order to amuse his fool of a country," he was in the midst of enemies, persecutions, and misfortunes.

Those whom he had not praised enough and those whom he had not praised at all were equally envenomed against him. "Join to that the crime of having printed this bagatelle without a permit sealed with yellow wax, and the wrath of the ministry against such treason; add to that the outcries of the court and the threat of a *lettre de cachet*, and you will have only a faint idea of the pleasant situation I am in, and of the protection given here to the *belles-lettres*."

There was danger in the air. He knew the insecurity of his position, and that his only safety was in getting upon his side a certain public opinion, — a public pride, — which would make the government ashamed to molest an ornament of the country. Hence his rage at such letters as those of Rousseau, which gave countenance and courage to the natural enemies of the human mind, — those who appealed to the dungeon and the fire when their interpretation of the universe was called in question. He was one against a host; he could depend on no effective support except his own tact and talent.

Among his minor writings, published during the last year or two of his attempt to continue his career in Paris, were three pieces in prose which attest his forethought and skill in this unequal combat. One of these was a long letter to the editors of the "Nouvelliste du Parnasse," politely remonstrating with them upon their harshness in dealing with the authors noticed by them. He said that, for his own part, he never permitted himself the liberty of saying or writing plain Fontenelle or Chaulieu, but always M. de Fontenelle and M. l'Abbé de Chaulieu, and he had corrected several persons of the habit of using such indecent familiarity towards men who shed lustre upon France. He might say "the great Corneille," since that poet was one of the ancients; but he always said M. Racine and M. Boileau, as those great men had been almost his contemporaries. The purport of the piece was that, because a man had failed to write a perfect work, he had not thereby

forfeited his claim to decent civility, and that men who assumed to criticise others should set an example, not only of just thinking, but of good breeding also.

Another of these pieces was in the form of a letter to his secretary and nascent poet, Lefèvre, upon the "Inconveniences attached to Literature." He tells this young man what he might expect if he should ever be so unfortunate as to write a good book in France: first, a year of suspense and solicitation while the censor held the manuscript; next, to be torn to pieces by the gazettes, which sell in proportion as they are malignant and abusive. It would be worse if he wrote for the stage: the actors, justly indignant at the abasement to which the law condemns them, lavish upon an author all the contempt with which they are covered; and the piece being at last performed, one bad joke from the pit gives it its quietus. You succeed? Then you are burlesqued at the minor theatres, twenty pamphlets prove that you ought not to have succeeded, and the learned affect to despise you because you write in French. Trembling, you carry your work to a lady of the court: she gives it to her maid to make into curl-papers; and the laced lackey who wears the livery of luxury derides your coat, which is the livery of indigence. After forty years of toil, you intrigue a place in the Academy, and go to pronounce with broken voice an oration which will be forgotten the next day forever. "One regrets to see the device of immortality at the head of so many declamations, which announce nothing of eternal except the oblivion to which they are condemned." All this in the lightest manner, sown thick with those happy touches and allusions which make a piece readable.

The third of these defensive, propitiatory pieces was in the guise of a "Letter to a Chief Clerk," a personage to whom a minister might be supposed to consign a new book for examination, and who therefore had a certain power over literature. He asks this imaginary clerk to remember, when he is examining a work, that if there had been a literary inquisition at Rome we should not possess Horace or Juvenal, nor the philosophical works of Cicero; and if in England, not Milton, Dryden, Pope, or Locke. "Repress libels, repress obscene tales, but let honest thought be free; let not Bayle be contraband."

He called attention to the commercial aspects of the case: "The thoughts of men have become an important article of commerce; Dutch booksellers gain a million a year because Frenchmen have had intellect. The genius of Molière, Corneille, Racine, and the dramatists formed by them lure to Paris great numbers of people from remote provinces and states, who come to enjoy pleasures nobler than those of sense. Foreigners who hate France bow in grateful homage to French genius. A magistrate who presumes to think that, because he has bought a seat on the bench, it is beneath his dignity to see 'Cinna' performed shows much gravity and little taste." The Romans built prodigies of architecture in which to witness the combats of beasts, and Paris had not one passable theatre for the presentation of the masterpieces of the human mind. "What man in Paris is animated by a regard for the public welfare? We gamble, we sup, we slander, we make bad songs, and go to sleep in stupidity, only to begin again on the morrow our round of lightness and indifference. Try, monsieur, to rouse us from this barbarous lethargy, and, if you can, do something for letters, which do so much for France!"¹

Thus he strove to make a party in France for the rights of the human mind. Shakespeare, during the dismalest period of Puritanism, found a public in London capable of drawing from him, and generously rewarding, the sublimest of his tragedies, the most exquisite of his comedies. But Shakespeare confined himself to his vocation, and did not write "Temples of Taste." As dramatist, Voltaire, too, could have lived at the capital of his country; but the drama, much as he loved it, was really, at times, little more than the price he was willing to pay for the opportunity to act directly upon the intellect of France. It was a custom with him, all his life, whenever the storm howled menacingly about him, to divert public attention and disarm prejudiced authority by producing a new play. Twice lately he had declared his firm resolve never to write another play: once in the preface to "Zaïre," and again in the "Temple du Goût." He laughed when the revised "Temple du Goût" was brought to him on the day of publication, for he was just beginning a new tragedy.

That ingenious composition proved to be more than the sen-

¹ 62 Œuvres de Voltaire, 26 to 31.

sation of a week. "It is detested and read by all the world," wrote the author in 1733. It was burlesqued at the Marionnettes. Sick Punchinello applies to a doctor, who advises blows with a stick, to make the patient sweat. "I have already tried that remedy," says Punchinello, "and it did me no good." Another doctor advises purgation and *lavements*, our poet's well-known remedies; and so he finally reaches the Temple du Goût, where he is enthroned upon a *chaise percée*. This exhibition was stopped by the police. In July, 1733, a dramatic burlesque of the piece was given at one of the minor theatres, wherein Voltaire himself was personated, dressed as a Frenchman, but in an English fabric of large pattern. He was made to talk, as an indignant spectator records, "like a fool, a perfect ninny, full of himself, who pokes his nose into everything, devoid of taste and judgment, finding nothing good except his own works." The burlesque was vehemently applauded, and ran many nights. "For my part," says the spectator just quoted, "my heart is pierced; I cannot bear to see one of the brightest spirits of France treated so."¹

The ministry, he adds, were besought to suppress this play also, but refused, "being not unwilling to mortify a too bold spirit, and to punish him for certain truths scattered here and there in his works." Jordan may refer here to the new edition of his "works" published in Holland, which excited in the author's own mind lively apprehensions. The editors, he remarked to Cideville, have taken care, whenever there were two readings of a passage, "to print the most dangerous and the most *burnable*. I shall keep it out of France."

The tide still running strongly against him, he tried his device of bringing out the new play, that "Adélaïde du Guesclin," in which once more he used a romantic French subject of the Middle Ages, and introduced French historic names. The very first act did not escape hissing. During the second, when a Duke de Nemours came upon the stage wounded, his arm in a sling, the audacity of such an approach to naturalness called down a storm of disapproval. In the last act, when the Duke de Vendôme said to the Sire de Couci, "Are you content, Couci?" a person in the pit cried out, *Couci-Couci!* which is a French familiar equivalent of our *So-So*.

¹ Voyage Littéraire, par C. E. Jordan, page 64.

The joke gave a convenient opportunity to an audience that was already in a very damning humor. The theatre resounded with *Couci-Couci*; the curtain went down to the hissing thunder of *Couci-Couci*; and the piece, after one more performance, was shelved for thirty-one years. In 1765 the actors revived it from the self-same copy, and it had a success only less pronounced than that of "Zaïre." For the present, however, this attempt to present the France of 1387 in a romantic light to the France of 1734 only weakened the hold of the author upon his best protector, the public of Paris.

He was in frequent alarm during the rest of the year, for he had now gone so far with his English Letters that at any moment a copy might escape. The little book was published in London, and was printing at Rouen. His letters to Thieriot, Cideville, Jore, and Formont teem with warnings not to let loose a sheet of the work until he gave the signal. There were times, he explained to them, when almost anything could be published with impunity, and there were times when the censorship scented heresy in every doubtful word. Such a time, he said, was then passing over them. "Tell Jore," he kept writing to his Rouen friends, "that if one copy gets out he will find himself in the Bastille, his license forfeited, his family ruined." Several copies, however, reached Paris early in 1734; sent, perhaps, as "feelers." The author wrote to Formont in April, "The Letters philosophical, political, poetical, critical, heretical, and diabolical are going off in London, in English, with great success. But, then, the English are Pope-scorners, cursed of God. The Gallican church, I fear, will be a little harder to please. Jore has promised me a fidelity proof against every temptation. I do not yet know if there has not been some little breach in his virtue. He is strongly suspected in Paris of having sold some copies. He has had upon that subject a little conversation with M. Héroult, lieutenant of police, and, by a miracle greater than all those of Saint Pâris and the Apostles, he is not in the Bastille. He must, however, make up his mind to go thither some day. It appears to me that he has a fixed vocation for that pleasant retreat. I shall try not to have the honor of accompanying him."

For the time the danger seemed averted, and the author

was balked of his purpose to exhibit to France the spectacle of a country governed by law. The marriage of the Duke de Richelieu to the Princess de Guise was about to be celebrated at Monjeu, near Autun, a hundred and fifty miles to the south-east of Paris. This was a marriage of Voltaire's own making, as he tells Cideville. "I conducted the affair like an intrigue of comedy." He also drew up the contract, notary's son as he was, and traveled fifty leagues "to see the happy pair put to bed," in the style of the period. With him went the Marquise du Châtelet, a near relation of the bridegroom, and, probably, other persons invited to the wedding.

This lady, who shared the poet's anxieties with regard to the dreadful book, having even seen some of the proof sheets at the author's abode in the Rue de Longpont, left a servant in Paris with orders to mount at the first rumor of danger, and ride with all speed to give him warning. Friends likely to get earlier news were notified and put on the alert, particularly D'Argental, for fifty years the poet's "guardian angel." "I have a mortal aversion to a prison," wrote Voltaire to him this spring. "I am sick, and close air would kill me."

In May, 1734, while the author was still at Monjeu, the storm burst. All at once, no one knew whence, copies of the book began to circulate everywhere in Paris,—a pirated edition, with the full name of the author on the title-page! Voltaire had sent three copies to be bound, some time before, and at the binder's shop the work was read by a printer, who perceived its salable nature. Penmen sat up all night; the whole book was copied; and, during the Richelieu honeymoon, a large edition was printed. Appended to the work, and designed to be bound with it, the pirate printer found a hundred pages or more of another composition, entitled "Remarks upon the Thoughts of Pascal." The two works had little in common, but they now appeared in the same volume, a mass of heresy and good sense, of solid truth and amusing satire. Pascal was a fascinating subject to Voltaire; as, indeed, he must ever be to susceptible readers, whether they agree or disagree with him. He was an example of a noble nature perverted and prostrated by panic fear. As our Pascal, Jonathan Edwards, was terrified into Calvinism by a fever that caused him to be shaken over the pit of hell, so

this brilliant and lovely Blaise Pascal, the Edwards of France, was made a craven Jansenist by a narrow escape from destruction. As he was riding, one day, in Paris, in a carriage drawn by four horses, the leaders took fright, and, dashing upon a bridge without railings, plunged into the water, and drew the vehicle to the very edge of the bridge. The traces broke, and no one was injured. Pascal, worn by excessive study, nervous and weak, was paralyzed by terror, and, for months after, he fancied that he saw an abyss yawning at his side. Finally, all other fear was merged into one supreme affright: *Another inch, and his soul had been eternally damned!* No more geometry, nor Greek, nor natural science, nor anything else profitable or pleasant. Hair shirt instead; an iron breastplate, with points to pierce his flesh; cruel fasting; abject, incessant prayers. At thirty-nine this gifted man, a noble mind in ruins, had completed his slow suicide, and left behind him those Thoughts of his, to assist in giving another lease of life to the most pernicious theory of man's duty that has ever saddened and demoralized human nature.

Voltaire's comments were moderate and respectful in tone. With his usual adroitness he calls his readers' attention to the difficulties arising from accepting legends as history, rhapsody as prophecy, self-annihilation as virtue. Pascal says, for example, that since there is a God we should love only *him*, not his creatures. Voltaire replies, "We *must* love his creatures, and very tenderly, too,—country, wife, father, children; we must love them so well that God will make them love us, whether we wish it or not." Pascal exalts the Christian religion as holy beyond comparison, and true beyond question. "Think," says Voltaire, "that it was on the way to mass that men committed the massacres of Ireland and St. Bartholomew; and that it was after mass and on account of the mass that so many innocent people, so many mothers, so many children, were murdered in the crusade against the heretics of the south of France. O Pascal! Such are the results of the endless quarrels upon the dogmas, upon the mysteries that could have no results except quarrels. There is not an article of faith which has not given birth to a civil war!"

The volume containing the English Letters and the Re-

marks upon Pascal was denounced early in May, 1734. Every copy that could be found was seized. Jore was arrested and consigned to the Bastille; his edition was confiscated. A *lettre de cachet* was launched against Voltaire. The parliament of Paris condemned the book to be publicly burned by the executioner; which was performed in Paris, June 10, 1734, in the manner before described. The residence of the author was searched, its contents were thrown into confusion, and some money was stolen from it.

May 11th, M. de la Briffe, charged with the duty of arresting the author of the offensive volume, arrived at Monjeu. He was informed that the Duke de Richelieu was gone to the army to join his regiment, — the regiment Richelieu, of which the duke was colonel. As to M. de Voltaire, he had left the château on Thursday last, five days before. He was gone to Lorraine, so the officer was told, to drink the waters; and Lorraine was not yet part of the dominions of the King of France. It is extremely probable that this easy opportunity to get out of the way was intentionally afforded him. M. de la Briffe, it is thought, was neither surprised nor sorry to find the bird flown.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MADAME DU CHÂTELET AND HER CHÂTEAU.

AN amusing page of the St. Simon Memoirs presents to us the Baron de Breteuil, reader to Louis XIV., and afterwards "introducer of ambassadors." This baron, though not wanting in intellect nor in scholarship, was very much the courtier and man of fashion; ill informed on subjects out of the range of the antechamber, but not the less positive on that account in expressing his opinions. In our rough way we should call him a conceited old bore. The Duke de St. Simon more politely says that he was "endured and laughed at." At the table of the minister, M. de Pontchartrain, the baron was discoursing one day in his most fluent and confident manner before a numerous company, when Madame de Pontchartrain said to him, "With all your knowledge, I'll bet you don't know who composed the Lord's Prayer." The baron laughed, and tried hard to pooh-pooh the question as too trifling to be answered. Madame perceived his embarrassment, and mercilessly pushed her advantage. He contrived to parry her attacks until the company rose to return to the drawing-room. On the way, M. de Caumartin, his relation, whispered in his ear, "Moses!" The baron at once recovered his self-confidence, and, when the guests were seated, renewed the topic, again insisting that he was ashamed to answer a question so trivial. Madame still defying him to name the author, he said at length, "There is no one who does not know that Moses wrote the Lord's Prayer." A roar of laughter followed, and the poor baron, as St. Simon remarks, "could no longer find a door to get out by."¹ It was long before he could forgive Caumartin, and longer before the story ceased to be one of the standard jests of the court.

This Baron de Breteuil was the father of Madame du Châte-

¹ 2 Mémoires de St. Simon, 145. Paris, 1873.

let, whom Voltaire accompanied to the wedding at Monjeu. He had seen her when she was a child; perhaps at the house of M. de Caumartin, when he was a young fugitive from Maître Alain's dusty solicitor's office. She had forgotten him, for they did not meet again until 1733, when she was a married woman, twenty-seven years of age, the mother of three children, namely, Pauline, seven years old, Louis, five, and Victor, an infant, born in April of that very year, 1733.¹

This lady concerned herself with the paternoster as little as her father, and she was probably neither less fluent nor less positive than the hero of St. Simon's anecdote. At fifteen she began to write a translation of Virgil's "*Æneid*" in verse, some portions of which Voltaire afterwards read, and often extolled. From childhood she was a student and a reader. It is not necessary to deduct too much from the eulogium of Voltaire, who was her lover for many years and her friend always. Her writings show that she was a woman of some ability, and we know from several well-authenticated anecdotes that her mathematical talent was extraordinary. Born in a better time and reared amid better influences, she might have won the respect of Europe by such work as Mrs. Somerville, Miss Herschel, and Miss Mitchell have since performed, and left a reputation as cheering as theirs.

Her discourse on the "Existence of God" is as good an argument as we can ever expect from a lady who does not perceive the graver and newer difficulties of the question. Her opening remark has been frequently used by theologians since her day, to the effect that God is, if possible, *more* necessary to physical science than to moral, and ought to be the foundation and conclusion of all scientific research. From this she proceeds in the usual way: "Something exists, since I exist; and since something exists, something must always have existed." In treating the question of the origin of evil she uses the metaphysical phrases of the century very neatly, and the composition is one that would do credit to a New England preceptress of a later day.

Not so madame's "Reflections upon Happiness." In order to be happy, she tells us, we must be free from prejudices, virtuous, in good health, capable of illusions, and have tastes

¹ Lettres de la Marquise du Châtelet, Paris, 1878, page 8.

and passions. Rational self-indulgence is her idea of happiness, which is not that of a New England preceptress. In this treatise she breaks occasionally into autobiography: "I have a very good constitution, but I am not robust. There are certain things which surely destroy my health, such as wine, for example, and all sorts of liquors; and so from my earliest youth I have refrained from them. I have a temperament of fire; hence I pass the morning in drowning myself with liquids. Finally, I often give myself up to the pleasures of the table, which God has given me a capacity for; but I make up for those excesses by a severe regimen, which I begin the moment I feel any inconvenience, and thus I always avoid disease."

Beautiful she was not, nor well-formed. She was tall, rather bony, with flat chest and large limbs; but, on the other hand, she had fine eyes and a spacious, noble forehead, abundant fine black hair, and a pleasing cast of countenance. At twenty-seven, when Voltaire renewed his acquaintance with her, she was far from wanting personal charms. So Maupertuis records, who was giving her lessons in geometry at the time; so testifies Madame Denis, Voltaire's niece; and so Latour, the painter of her portrait, which still exists. They all record, too, and the marquise herself mentions the fact, that she was disposed to heighten the effect of her good points by all the means which art and nature have placed within woman's reach. She was fond of dress and decoration, fond of gaming, addicted to all the pleasures of her time and sphere. She played very well on the spinet, and could converse on all the topics, from bricabrac to Newton's "Principia."

At nineteen she was married to the Marquis du Châtelet, an officer of ancient house and dilapidated fortune, a tractable young man, without conversation, with not the least tincture of literature, and extremely complaisant to his wife. The gossip of the day assigned her various lovers, the Duke de Richelieu among the rest; and we have many letters of hers to the duke, written in her later life, and they certainly read like the letters of a woman to a former lover. Neither husband nor wife had any scruples of principle or feeling with regard to miscellaneous amours. Like the society around them, they had resumed the morals of primitive man.

It was early in the summer of 1733, not later than June, that Voltaire and Madame du Châtelet met in Paris: she, a woman of fashion studying mathematics under Maupertuis; and he immersed as usual in poetry and business. They soon became warmly attached to one another. In July he addressed to her a poetical epistle upon Calumny, styling her in the first line *respectable Emilie*. Then we see the lady and her friend, the Duchess de Saint Pierre, surprising the poet in his "hole," as he liked to call his lodgings in the Rue de Longpont. He did his best to entertain them, extemporized a repast of fricasseed chickens, and sent them a poetical invitation to supper. She was *Emilie* to him henceforth as long as she lived. "Who is Emilie?" asks Cideville, on reading the epistle upon Calumny. Voltaire replies, "You are Emilie in the form of man, and she is Cideville in that of woman." In November she was taking lessons in English. "She learned it," wrote Voltaire, "in fifteen days. Already she translates at sight; she has had but five lessons of an Irish teacher. Indeed, Madame du Châtelet is a prodigy." He began to think that women could do whatever men could do, and that the only difference between them was that women were more amiable. "My little system," he styled this novel opinion.

What of the Marquis du Châtelet? Nothing at all. He viewed this enthusiastic friendship with an equanimity that was never disturbed. During their *liaison* of sixteen years, this docile and tolerant soldier frequented his abode quite as usual, and remained on the most cordial terms with a poet who lent him money, and drew the fire of a wife perhaps oppressively superior. All this, I repeat, being simply inconceivable to persons of our race, it were useless to expend words upon it. These people had amended one of the ancient commandments by striking out the word *not*, and adding, "but thou shalt commit no indecorum." Voltaire obeyed this latter amendment with ingenious consistency as long as he lived.

It is a wonder how children were brought up under this new dispensation. Many of them were reared by good and faithful servants who adhered to the old dispensation. Some had the ill luck of Talleyrand, whose mother scarcely saw him during his infancy, and who came back to her from his nurse lamed for life. Not a few, doubtless, had the fate which be-

fell the infant of the Marquise du Châtelet. We have a note of hers, written on a Sunday evening in January, 1734, to Maupertuis, her professor of mathematics, which explains what that fate was: "My son died to-night, monsieur. I avow to you that I am extremely afflicted at it, and I shall not go out, as you may well believe. If you wish to come to console me, you will find me alone. I refuse to admit company, but I feel that there is no time when it will not give me extreme pleasure to see you."

In April, 1734, as we have seen, she accompanied Voltaire to the Château de Saint-Blaise, near Autun, the abode of the Prince de Guise, where she witnessed the marriage of a princess of the house to the Duke de Richelieu. It was a honeymoon to two pairs of lovers, those weeks spent at the magnificent château of the Guises. She wrote to Maupertuis that, between Voltaire and the amiable Duchess de Richelieu, she was passing blissful days, and that nothing was wanting to her happiness but her daily lesson in geometry. The soldiers departed at length for the army, leaving to the ladies the full enjoyment of their poet. Dread rumors from Paris arrived to trouble the peace of this Arcadia, and soon a hint came direct from the cabinet of a minister that the author of the English Letters would do well to leave the Château de Saint-Blaise, and "absent himself." He acted upon this hint, and left two ladies inconsolable. The marquise and himself had intended to return to Paris in three weeks, and now, in a moment, they were separated, perhaps never again to meet in France. For some days she thought that probably the *lettre de cachet* had overtaken him, and that he was actually confined in the fortress of Auxonne, to which it consigned him. "If he was in England," she wrote to a friend, May 12th, "I should be less to be pitied. I love my friends with some disinterestedness. His companionship would make the happiness of my life; his safety would make its tranquillity. But to know that he, with such health and imagination as he has, is in a prison, I assure you, I do not find in myself constancy enough to support the idea. Madame de Richelieu is my only consolation, — a charming woman, with a heart capable of friendship and gratitude. She is, if possible, more afflicted than I am; for she owes to him her marriage, the happiness of her life."

News from the fugitive reassured her; at least he was not in a fortress. But the minister was adamant; the parliament of Paris was burning the terrible little book; there was small hope of the author ever being permitted to live again in France. "I shall retire at once to my château," wrote the marquise. "Men have become insupportable; so false are they, so unjust, so full of prejudices, so tyrannical."

Meanwhile she used her knowledge of court and cabinet in his behalf. Born and reared at court, she knew what woman governed each powerful man, what man controlled each influential woman, and how all these were to be reached. She brought to bear her connection, the Duchess d'Aiguillon, upon the Princess de Conti, who had great weight with an adamant Keeper of the Seals; and, in consequence, better news came from Paris. Hope revived. If Voltaire would disavow the offensive book, the *lettre de cachet* might be canceled, and the storm blow over. It never cost Voltaire the most momentary scruple to disavow anything that had a savor of the Bastille in it. His disavowals never deceived one human being, least of all the ministry that demanded them. They were not intended nor expected to deceive. On this occasion he disavowed, as Madame du Châtelet remarked, "with affecting docility." If she refers to his letter of May, 1734, to the interceding Duchess d'Aiguillon, she uses undescriptive language.

"They say I must retract," he wrote to the amiable duchess. "Very willingly. I will declare that Pascal is always right; that if St. Luke and St. Mark contradict one another it is a proof of the truth of religion to those who know well how to take things; that another lovely proof of religion is that it is unintelligible. I will avow that all priests are gentle and disinterested; that Jesuits are honest people; that monks are neither proud, nor given to intrigue, nor stinking; that the holy inquisition is the triumph of humanity and tolerance. In a word, I will say all that may be desired of me, provided they will leave me in repose, and not indulge the mania to persecute a man who has never done harm to any one, who lives in retirement, and who knows no other ambition but that of paying court to you. It is certain, besides, that the edition was published in spite of me, that many things have been

added to it, and that I have done all that was humanly possible to discover the publisher. Permit me, madame, to renew my thanks and prayers. The favor I ask of the minister is that he will not deprive me of the honor of seeing you. It is a favor for which I should not know how to importune him too much."

Other friends joined their efforts. Madame du Deffand wrought upon M. de Maurepas. The Princess de Conti, the Duchess du Maine, the Duchess de Villars, the Duchess de Richelieu, and other ladies plied their arts and employed their influence, the poet himself ever writing as he flew. The pursuit was relaxed, and Madame du Châtelet was so far reassured as to be able to resume her geometry. She told her Maupertuis that he would find her just where he had left her, having forgotten nothing and learned nothing, but cherishing the same desire to make a progress in geometry worthy of such a master. She had taken up a treatise by Guisnée upon the application of algebra to geometry, but could make nothing of it, and was impatient for his assistance. "You sow flowers upon a road where others find only ruts. Your imagination knows how to embellish the driest subjects without taking from them their accuracy and precision. I feel how much I should lose if I did not profit by your goodness in condescending to my weakness, and in teaching me truths so sublime almost in jesting. I feel that I shall always have over you the advantage of having studied under the most amiable and, at the same time, the most profound mathematician in the world." In many letters of this period she pours forth the warmest expressions of gratitude and affection for her instructor; scolding him also, now and then, for not writing to her oftener than once a week, and failing sometimes to come to her suppers in Paris. In June, she went to Versailles to continue her efforts on behalf of the wanderer, and passed the summer near the court. She was one of the ladies whose rank gave them the right of *tambour* with the queen; that is, the right of sitting on a stool in the queen's presence, a tremendous privilege, to get which women schemed for a life-time, and "jumped the life to come."

The fugitive, where was he? The nobility of a French province were a family party, inhabiting various châteaux, but

connected by all the ties of blood, usage, and interest. During the pleasant weeks of May and June, the poet moved about from château to château once more, always near the border, constantly advised of possible danger by madame la marquise, and obeying her injunctions with "affecting docility." He spent some days at Cirey, in Champagne, where the Du Châtelets had an old château; and while there he heard news that drew his attention from his own affairs, and changed the direction of his thoughts. The Duke de Richelieu, on rejoining his regiment before Philipsburgh (now Udenheim) in Baden, met some of his new relatives of the house of Guise, two of whom, the Prince de Lixin and the Prince de Pons, had refused to sign the marriage contract. They objected to a marriage negotiated by a poet as he would have arranged a marriage in the last act of a comedy. An altercation occurred, ending in a duel between the bridegroom and M. de Lixin. The rumor reached Voltaire that the Prince de Lixin had died upon the field, and that the Duke de Richelieu was severely wounded, perhaps mortally. He hastened to the camp, appalled at such a tragie ending of his comedy. He found both combatants in very good condition; at least, not seriously damaged, and able to bear the hardships of war. Colonel the Duke de Richelieu was making war in the true Xerxes manner, with a personal train of seventy mules, thirty horses, and a proportionate number of servants. Other great lords were similarly equipped. The author, proscribed at Paris, was received with enthusiasm at the camp, where he was fêted by princes and marshals, and where, perhaps, he tasted the provisions supplied by Duverney and Voltaire, contractors. The ministry, supposing that his visit to the army was of the nature of a bravado, hardened towards him again, and Madame du Châtelet advised him to cut his visit short. The siege, moreover, was becoming more active than was convenient to visitors.

"The troops show great ardor [he wrote to a lady of Cirey, July 1st]. It is astonishing. We swear we will beat the Prince Eugène; we are not afraid of him; but, notwithstanding, we intrench to the teeth; we have lines, a ditch, pits, and another ditch in advance, — a new invention, which looks very pretty and very well contrived to break the necks of people who come to attack our lines. All the

indications are that the Prince Eugène is going to attempt the passage of the pits and the ditches about four in the morning, to-morrow, Friday, the day of the Virgin. He is said to be much devoted to Mary, and she is likely to side with him against our general, who is a Jansenist. You are aware, madame, that you Jansenists are suspected not to be sufficiently devoted to the Virgin; you ridicule the society of Jesuits, and *Paradise opened to Philagie by one hundred and one Devotions to the Mother of God*. We shall see to-morrow for whom victory will declare itself. Meanwhile, we cannonade one another powerfully. The lines of our camp are fringed by eighty pieces of cannon, which are beginning to play. Yesterday we finished carrying a certain horn-work, half of which M. de Belle-Isle had already taken. Twelve officers of the guards were wounded at that cursed work. Behold, madame, human folly in all its glory and all its horror! I intend to leave forthwith the sojourn of bombs and bullets."

Toward the end of July, after a merry visit of two or three weeks, he left the camp, and returned to his "hiding-place;" for so he called the dilapidated old castle belonging to the Marquis du Châtelet, in Champagne, — "my château," to which madame la marquise threatened to retire from contact with prejudiced, proud, and tyrannical men. The lady had rarely, if ever, lived in this sequestered relic of the thirteenth century. It was, indeed, scarcely inhabitable without extensive repairs, which the family could not afford. The marquis had no great income for his rank; and he had a wife fond of play and pleasure; he had two children; he had a lawsuit of eighty years' standing; he belonged to an army of which a colonel could take to the field a retinue of one hundred animals and thirty servants. At the best, the château of Cirey would not naturally have been an inviting abode to a lady accustomed from infancy to the magnificences of Versailles and the charms of Fontainebleau. Suddenly, however, the old castle near the border (and because it was near the border) became an object of extreme interest to madame, to her poet, and to a complaisant husband.

A dream of a place in the country, a lodge in some accessible, well-kept, pleasant wilderness, where glorious things could be composed in peace and love, far from the distractions of the world, floats ever before the minds of the toil-worn votaries of literature. "I have a passion for retirement,"

Voltaire repeats many times. "I am a fawn, out of place except in sylvan scenes," he writes more than once. He truly loved the country, as actors love it, as many other men love it whose occupations are extremely remote from country things and ways. The idea now occurred to convert this ancient abode of the Du Châtelets into such a retreat as he had longed for, to which all of them could remove, the marquis, madame, the children, and the poet, making it their chief abode; where a persecuted author could write immortal works, and a lady of great intellect could study mathematics and compose treatises on the Existence of a Supreme Being. So thought, so done. Voltaire had the honor of lending the marquis forty thousand francs for repairs, at an interest of five per cent., not paid, and the work of reparation was begun at once.¹

Cirey-sur-Blaise (there are six Cireys in France) is a hard place to find, whether you look for it on the map or in the department of Haute-Marne, as that part of the old province of Champagne is now called. A part of the old château still stands, and belongs to the estate of a descendant of the Du Châtelets, the late Marquis de Damas. In 1863, the historian, George Grote, gave up the project of a pilgrimage to it. "We next," records Mrs. Grote, "made a *détour* for the express purpose of visiting the Château de Cirey, dear to us both as the residence, a century ago, of Voltaire and Madame du Châtelet. But in this pious pilgrimage we were defeated by the difficulty of obtaining any manner of conveyance to Cirey. We got within sixteen English miles of it at Joinville; from which pleasant village we could find neither cart nor carriage for love or money during our stay."² They should have gone to Chaumont-sur-Marne, the chief town of the department, a city of seven thousand inhabitants, the centre of the iron trade and of the iron manufacture of that iron-yielding region. The landlord of the "Ecu de France" would probably have been only too happy to provide a vehicle for illustrious English travelers.

It was already a land of forges and iron mines when Voltaire went into hiding there in the summer of 1734, the famous wine country lying a little to the north of it, and showing such

¹ Voltaire to Comtesse de Montrevel, November 15, 1749. 72 Œuvres, 92.

² Personal Life of George Grote, by Mrs. Grote, page 270.

names as Sillery, Epernay, Verzenay, and others that now figure on the labels of wine bottles. Around Cirey the country is generally hard and uninteresting, as befits a region that supplies France with iron, charcoal, marble, grindstones, glass, building stone, and a thousand articles of cutlery and iron ware. The château had only its great antiquity, its romantic aspect, and its great size to recommend it; an extensive edifice, with a chapel and all the other appurtenances of a feudal residence of the time of the Crusades, but with scarcely a window or door capable of keeping out wind and rain. A few thousand francs, expended by a man who knows how to get a franc's worth for every franc, will make some corners of an old château inhabitable, and this was done at Cirey. He began the work in August, 1734, while Madame du Châtelet was still at court ameliorating ministers.

In the absence of the lord and lady of the château he was very much the grand seigneur; at least, he played the part with grace and effect. "I take the liberty of sending you a boar's head," he writes to a neighbor, the Countess de la Neuville. "This *monsieur* has just been assassinated, in order to give me an opportunity of paying my court to you." I sent for a buck, but none could be found. This boar was destined to give you his head. I swear to you that I think very little of the head of a wild pig, and I believe it is only eaten from vanity. If I had taken nothing but a lark, I should have offered it to you, all the same." In return, the countess sends the lord *pro tem.* a basket of peaches. He is occupied, meanwhile, with leads for the roof, with fire-places, carriage-ways, chimney-pots, surrounded by masons and heaps of old plaster. New workmen arrive. "I write their names every day in a large account-book; I cannot leave the château until some one comes to relieve me." But he could write verses for the ladies and retouch his opera of "Samson" for Rameau in the midst of chaos. If the warning comes from Paris, he can skip over the border. He did so in October, and went as far as Brussels, returning, after a few weeks' absence, to welcome Madame du Châtelet, who was coming to join him.

Chaos itself was now confused. On a certain day in November arrived from Paris "two hundred packages," harbingers

of the lady of the château. Next came a letter from her, saying that she had been detained, and could not come as soon as she had appointed. Lastly, at the close of the day, in the midst of all this litter, madame herself arrived, "in a kind of two-horse cart," bruised, shaken, tired, but very well. She found that, if much had been done, more remained to do : beds without curtains, rooms without windows, closets full of old china, but no easy-chairs, beautiful vehicles and no horses to draw them, an abundance of ancient tapestry hanging in tatters. She entered upon the work of restoration with zest, and speedily undid much that her poet had done. "She has windows put," he wrote to Madame de la Neuville, "where I had made doors. She changes stairs into chimneys, and chimneys into stairs. She has lindens planted where I had proposed elms, and if I had laid out a vegetable garden she turns it into flower beds. Besides this, she does fairy work in her house. She converts rags into tapestry, and finds the secret of furnishing Cirey out of nothing." Several weeks were spent in work of this kind, and gradually portions of "the most dilapidated château on earth," as Voltaire called it, became inhabitable and presentable. He had bought a valuable picture, now and then, of late years as opportunity offered, and thus he was able to hang a considerable number of fine works upon these ancient walls. Horses were procured ; and soon madame had, among other carriages, "a little phaeton as light as a feather, drawn by horses as big as elephants."

At Christmas she was at Paris again, attending "the midnight mass" with Maupertuis, and taking him home with her to supper, after that festivity. She was there to be near Madame de Richelieu in her confinement, and to effect the canceling of the *lettre de cachet*. She passed the first weeks of 1735 between the bedside of the duchess and the cabinet of M. de Maurepas, with happy results both to the lady and the poet. March 2, 1735, the lieutenant of police wrote to Voltaire a letter worthy of a "paternal government" : —

"His Eminence and Monsieur the Keeper of the Seals have charged me, monsieur, to inform you that you are at liberty to return to Paris whenever you think proper. This permission is given on condition that you will occupy yourself here with objects which shall afford no grounds of complaint against

you, like those of the past. The more talent you have, monsieur, the more you ought to feel that you have enemies and jealous competitors. Shut their mouths, then, forever, by a course of conduct worthy of a wise man and of a man who has now reached a certain age."

This epistle, which found him still immersed in the details of reparation, had no effect upon the scheme of retirement. He showed himself in Paris for a few weeks in the spring, to notify friends and enemies that he was free to come and go like other men. He knew that Paris could not then be a safe place of residence for him; and even during this short stay rumors reached him of the currency of portions of his "Pucelle." There were lines in that burlesque which, under De Fleury and Maurepas, might have doomed the author to one of the wet dungeons of the Bastille. He withdrew in haste, and, after spending some time in Lorraine, returned to Cirey to continue the battle with chaos. He did not enjoy it. "I am worried with details. So afraid am I of making bad bargains, and so tired of urging on the workmen, that I have asked for a man to help me." But no day passed without its verse. In December, 1734, he could tell Cideville that, during the eight months of his "retreat," he had written "three or four thousand verses," and he sent to D'Argental a portion of the same in the form of a new tragedy, "Alzire."

Cirey was his home henceforth as long as Madame du Châtelet lived. He often fled from it at the rumor of danger. He sometimes remained for considerable periods at Paris and elsewhere; but Cirey was his home, to which he removed the works of art and curiosity, the books and memoranda, that he had accumulated in a life of forty years. He lived there, as far as visitors could usually discern, very much as an uncle might, — one of those good uncles who, having missed a happiness of their own, share by enhancing that of a brother or a sister; an uncle who has plenty of money, and gives watches to his nephews and nieces on their sixteenth birthday, and suddenly appears on the lawn, of a May morning, leading rapture in the guise of a pony. In the absence of visitors, the marquise and himself spent laborious days in study and composition, each remaining alone for seven and eight hours of the day, and meeting in the evening at the French sacrament of supper.

When a poet settled in the country, he was expected to dignify his abode with inscriptions, and he usually fulfilled this expectation. Voltaire's first attempt — a Latin couplet, as written in a letter to a friend — contained errors that have since given much consolation to clerical critics. It was designed for a small addition to the château which he had caused to be built, and which in this couplet he called *casa*, making both its syllables long. In the ancient republic of letters this was a capital offense. If Mr. Grote had pushed on to Cirey, he might have discovered that, before having the inscription engraved, Voltaire corrected the error. It reads thus upon one of the doors of the old château: —

“Hæc ingens incœpta domus fit parva; sed ævum
Degitur hïc felix et bene, magna sat est.”¹

Two other inscriptions, one in Latin and one in French, were until recently to be seen upon the door of a gallery which he built for philosophical apparatus. The Latin inscription, witty in itself, is also amusing for its observance of the established decorum of the château. The masculine gender is assigned to the “lover of virtue, the despiser of the vulgar and the court, the cultivator of friendship, who, withdrawn to his estate, was hiding a poet.” The world was invited to take note that it was a marquis who hid the poet, not Madame la Marquise.

“Hic virtutis amans, vulgi contemptor et aulæ,
Cultor amicitiaë vates latet abditus agro.”

A French inscription was placed under this, and may have been engraved there a little later: —

“Asile des beaux-arts, solitude où mon cœur
Est toujours occupé dans une paix profonde,
C'est vous qui donnez le bonheur
Que promettrait en vain le monde.”²

He had an unequalled facility in the trifles of poetry, many of which are so happy that, even in a prose translation, they are not devoid of interest. During the first year or two of his settlement at Cirey he composed a great number of inscrip-

¹ This house, begun on a vast scale, becomes small; but time passes here happily and well; it is large enough.

² Asylum of the fine arts, solitude in which my heart is always occupied in profound peace, it is you that give the happiness which the world would promise in vain.

tions, impromptus, epigrams, snatches of verse in letters, compliments to ladies at table, satirical couplets, and rhymed invitations. I select two or three, not usually accessible except to inhabitants of cities. He winds up an invitation thus : —

“ Certain vin frais, dont la mousse pressée
De la bouteille avec force élanécée,
Avec éclat fait voler le bouchon ;
Il part, on rit, il frappe le plafond.
De ce nectar l'écume pétillante
De nos Français est l'image brillante.”¹

The following is upon the château of Cirey : —

“ Un voyageur, qui ne mentit jamais,
Passe à Cirey, l'admire, le contemple ;
Il croit d'abord que ce n'est qu'un palais ;
Mais il voit Emilie. Ah ! dit-il, c'est un temple.”²

This was addressed to Madame du Châtelet upon his seeing her deep in algebra : —

“ Sans doute vous serez célèbre
Par les grands calculs de l'algèbre
Où votre esprit est absorbé :
J'oserais m'y livrer moi-même :
Mais, hélas ! $A + D = B$
N'est pas $= à je vous aime.$ ”³

One addressed to an officer who had some of his hair cut off by a cannon ball at a siege, and was not promoted for it, was much celebrated at the time : —

“ Des boulets allemands la pesante tempête
A, dit-on, coupé vos cheveux :
Les gens d'esprit sont fort heureux
Qu'elle ait respecté votre tête.
On prétend que César, le phénix des guerriers,
N'ayant plus de cheveux, se coiffa de lauriers :
Cet ornement est beau, mais n'est plus de ce monde.
Si César nous était rendu,
Et qu'en servant Louis il eût été tondu,
Il n'y gagnerait rien qu'une perruque blonde.”⁴

¹ A certain cool wine, the confined froth of which shot from the bottle with force, makes the cork fly ; it starts, we laugh, it hits the ceiling. The sparkling foam of this nectar is the brilliant image of our Frenchmen.

² A traveler, who never lies, passes by Cirey, admires it, contemplates it. At first he believes it is only a palace ; but he sees Emilie. “ Ah,” he says, “ it is a temple.”

³ Doubtless you will become famous through the grand calculations of algebra in which your mind is absorbed. I should dare to devote myself to them ; but, alas ! $A + D = B$ is not equal to *I love you*.

⁴ The weighty tempest of German bullets has, they say, cut your hair. Men of letters are very glad it respected your head. It is said that Cæsar, the phœnix

It were easy to fill ten pages of this volume from the light and sparkling verses of this period, if not from those addressed to Madame du Châtelet alone. I yield to the temptation of copying one more, upon Idleness, which was written to rouse the idle Linant to exertion, but written in vain: —

“ Connaissez mieux l’oisiveté :
 Elle est ou folie ou sagesse ;
 Elle est vertu dans la richesse,
 Et vice dans la pauvreté.
 On peut jouir en paix, dans l’hiver de sa vie,
 De ces fruits qu’au printemps sema notre industrie :
 Courtisans de la gloire, écrivains ou guerriers,
 Le sommeil est permis, mais c’est sur des lauriers.”¹

of warriors, having lost his hair, covered his head with laurels. That ornament is beautiful, but no longer in fashion. If Cæsar were restored to us, and if, while serving Louis, he had been shorn, he would gain nothing by it but a blonde peruke.

¹ Understand idleness better. It is either folly or wisdom; it is virtue in wealth and vice in poverty. In the winter of our life, we can enjoy in peace the fruits which in its spring our industry planted. Courtiers of glory, writers or warriors, slumber is permitted you, but only upon laurels.

CHAPTER XXIX.

MAN OF BUSINESS.

To almost any man of letters it would have been a disadvantage to live a hundred and forty miles from the capital. With such roads and vehicles as they had then in France, it was usually a journey of three or four days from Cirey to Paris, and might be one of five or six. The château was literally "twelve miles from a lemon;" but a coach from Paris appears to have passed near it two or three times a week, and there were villages four or five miles distant. Chaumont and Joinville, either of which might have sometimes furnished a lemon, were from twelve to sixteen miles away. Another difficulty was that all letters intrusted to the mail were liable to be opened, and the letters of Voltaire were sure to be. He was more than an author: he was importer, merchant, contractor, speculator, capitalist, money-lender; and he was now buried alive in the depths of Champagne, reputed to be the most provincial province of France! "Ninety-nine sheep and one Champagne man make a hundred beasts," says the old French proverb.

To his other labors were to be added those of a student and experimenter in science, a fashion then in Europe, and he cultivated this new field with his own ardor and tenacity. Every week he wanted something from Paris; every day some interest of his required intelligent attention. The literary news was necessary to him. Frequently he needed information from brother chemists and philosophers upon some point not yet elucidated in books. Often he wanted books hard to find, materials little known, apparatus not kept for sale. All this business he managed with that ease, tact, and success which usually marked his direction of mundane things.

Among his acquaintances at the capital there was a certain Abbé Moussinot, a kind of clerical notary, who conducted the

business affairs of his chapter, who knew how to "place" and how to collect money, and who speculated a little on his own account in pictures and rare objects. For eight years or more Voltaire had had dealings with him, had bought pictures of him, had employed him in transactions and negotiations, and had found him intelligent, prompt, faithful, secret. It was through this shrewd, obliging, and silent abbé that he kept open lines of communication with his base of supplies during the first years of his residence at Cirey. There is nothing in the vast range of his correspondence more characteristic than his familiar letters to the Abbé Moussinot, of which we possess about one hundred and fifty. Before entering upon his intellectual life in Champagne, his most brilliant, fertile, and effective period, I will seize the opportunity of presenting him to the reader as man of business. The most agreeable way of doing this will be simply to translate a few of these letters, and leave the reader to make his own comments and deductions. It is only necessary to bear in mind that, while he was writing these letters and managing an estate of sixty thousand francs a year, he was the most diligent and absorbed literary man in Europe, the dramatist of his age, the most productive of living authors, who was making wide and peculiar researches in history, ancient and modern, and was full of the new zeal for scientific experiment. He was also a correspondent punctual and profuse; and when a visitor arrived at the château he could appear wholly the man of pleasure, and arrange a series of entertainments that made life pass like a dream of festivity.

LETTERS FROM VOLTAIRE TO THE ABBÉ MOUSSINOT.

[March 21, 1736.] "MY DEAR ABBÉ, — I love your strong-box a thousand times better than that of a notary; there is no one in the world whom I trust as I do you; you are as intelligent as you are virtuous. You were made to be the solicitor-general of the order of the Jansenists, for you know that they call their union the *Order*; it is their cant; every community, every society, has its cant. Consider, then, if you are willing to take charge of the funds of a man who is not devout, and to do from friendship for that undevout man what you do for your chapter as a duty. You will be able in this way to make some good bargains in buying pictures; you will borrow from me some of the money in your strong-box. My affairs, as you know,

are very easy and very simple; you will be my superintendent wherever I may be myself; you will speak for me, and in your own name, to the Villars, to the Richelieus, to the D'Estaings, to the Guises, to the Guébriants, to the D'Aunneils, to the Lézéaux, and to other illustrious debtors of your friend. When a man speaks for his friend he asks justice; when it is I who solicit that justice, I have the air of asking a favor, and it is this that I wish to avoid. This is not all: you will act as my plenipotentiary, whether for my pensions payable by M. Paris-Duverney, by M. Tannevot, first clerk of the finances, or for the interest due me from the Hôtel-de-Ville, from Arouet, my brother, as well as for the bonds and money which I have at different notaries. You will have, my dear abbé, *carte-blanche* for all that which concerns me, and everything will be conducted in the greatest secrecy. Write me word if this charge is agreeable to you. Meanwhile, I pray you to send your *frotteur* to find a young man named Baculard d'Arnaud:¹ he is a student in philosophy at the College of Harcourt; he lives in the Rue Mouffetard. Give him, I beg you, this little manuscript [the "Epistle upon Calumny"], and make him from me a little present of twelve francs. I entreat you not to neglect this small favor which I ask you; this manuscript will be sold for his advantage. I embrace you with all my heart; love me always, and, especially, let us bind the bonds of our friendship closer by mutual confidence and reciprocal services."

[May 22, 1736.] "To punish you, my dear friend, for not having sent to find the young Baculard d'Arnaud, student in philosophy at the College of Harcourt, and living with M. Delacroix, Rue Mouffetard, — to punish you, I say, for not having given him the 'Epistle upon Calumny' and twelve francs, I condemn you to give him a louis d'or, and to exhort him from me to learn to write, which will contribute to his fortune. This is a little work of charity which, whether Christian or mundane, must not be neglected. . . . I expect news from you with impatience, and I embrace you with all my heart. I write to this young D'Arnaud. Instead of twenty-four francs, give him thirty livres when he comes to see you. I am going to seal my letter quick for fear that I augment the sum. *Received thirty livres. Signed, Baculard d'Arnaud.*"²

[September, 1736.] "Thirty-five thousand francs for tapestries of the 'Henriade'! That is much, my dear treasurer. It would be necessary, before all, to know how much the tapestry of Don Quixote sold for; it would be necessary, especially before commencing, that M. de Richelieu should pay me my fifty thousand francs. Let us sus-

¹ Voltaire's literary correspondent at Paris.

² Lettres de Voltaire à l'Abbé Moussinot. Paris, 1875, page 6.

pend, then, every project of tapestry, and let M. Oudri do nothing without more ample information. Buy for me, my dear abbé, a little table which may serve at once as screen and writing-desk, and send it in my name to the house of Madame de Winterfield.¹ Rue Plâtrière. Still another pleasure. There is a Chevalier de Mouhi, who lives at the Hotel Dauphin, Rue des Orties; this chevalier wishes to borrow of me a hundred pistoles, and I am very willing to lend them to him. Whether he comes to your house, or whether you go to his, I pray you to say to him that I take pleasure in obliging literary men when I can, but that I am actually very much embarrassed in my affairs; that nevertheless you will do all you can to find this money, and that you hope the reimbursement will be secured in such a way that there will be nothing to risk; after which you will have the goodness to inform me who this chevalier is, as well as the result of these preliminaries. Eighteen francs to the little D'Arnaud. Tell him I am sick and cannot write. Pardon all these trifles. I am a very tedious dabbler, but I love you with all my heart."

[July 30, 1736.] "The little table with a screen, which I asked you to buy for Madame de Winterfield, Rue Plâtrière, near Saint-Jacques, is a trifle. It must be very simple and a very good bargain."

[Summer, 1736.] "Oudri, my dear abbé, appears to me expensive; but if he makes two sets of hangings, can we not have them a little cheaper? I might be able even to have three of them made. If M. de Richelieu pays me, it will be well for me to invest my money in that way. The countenance of Henry IV. and that of Gabrielle d'Estrées in tapestry will succeed very well. Good Frenchmen will wish to have some Gabrielles and Henrys, especially if the good Frenchmen are rich. We are not very rich ourselves, just now; but the holy time of Christmas will give us, I hope, some consolation. Cannot Chevalier come to Cirey to execute under my own eyes designs from the 'Henriade'? Does he know enough of his art for that? They speak well of him, but he has not yet sufficient reputation to be unteachable. It is said there is at Paris a man who draws portraits to be worn in rings in a perfect manner. I have seen a face of Louis XV. of his doing, which was an excellent likeness. Have the goodness, my dear abbé, to disinter this man. You will find it impertinent that the same hand should paint the king and poor me; but friendship wishes it, and I obey friendship.² The Chevalier de

¹ This was Olimpe Duoyer, the young lady with whom Voltaire was in love during his first residence in Holland, in 1713.

² The artist in question was Barrier, an engraver of precious stones, who made a ring portrait of Voltaire for Madame du Châtelet soon after the date of this letter.

Mouhi, then, will send twice a week to Cirey the gossip of Paris. Enjoin it upon him to be infinitely secret; give him a hundred crowns, and promise him a payment once a month, or every three months, as he prefers. I treat you, my dear friend, as I beg you will treat me. I should be glad to be so happy as to receive some orders from you."

[October 27, 1736.] "I could wish, my dear and faithful treasurer, to have, under the greatest secrecy, some ready money deposited with a discreet and faithful notary, which he could place at interest for a time, and which, if necessary, I could get back without delay. The sum would be fifty thousand francs, and perhaps more. Are you not acquainted with a notary in whom you could confide? The whole would be in your name. I am very much discontented with M. Perret; he has two excellent qualities for a public man, he is brutal and indiscreet. . . . Have the goodness to give another louis d'or to D'Arnaud. Tell him then to have himself called simply D'Arnaud; that is a fine Jansenist name; Baculard is ridiculous."

[February, 1737.] "I find myself, my dear treasurer, in the situation of always having before me a large sum of money to dispose of. Your letters will be henceforth addressed to Madame d'Azilli, at Cirey. Put nothing in them too clearly which might reveal that it is I to whom you write. I find my obscurity convenient. I wish to have no correspondence with any one; I pretend to be ignored of all the world except you, whom I love with all my heart, and whom I beg very earnestly to find me a literary correspondent who will give me news with exactness, and whom you will leave in ignorance of my retreat."

[March 18, 1737.] "The principal of the debt of M. de Riche-lieu is 46,417 livres; date, May 5, 1735."¹

[March, 1737.] "I am very glad, my dear correspondent, that M. Berger thinks I am in England. I am there for all the world except you. Send, I pray you, a hundred louis d'or to M. the Marquis du Châtelet, who will bring them to me. Now, my dear abbé, are you willing that I should speak to you frankly? It is necessary for you to do me the favor of accepting every year a little honorarium, merely as a mark of my friendship. Let us not beat about the bush. You have a small salary from your canons; treat me as a chapter; take twice as much every year from your friend, the poet-philosopher, as your cloister gives you; this without prejudice to the gratitude which I shall always cherish. Arrange this and love me."

[April, 1737.] "I repeat to you, my tender friend, my urgent request not to speak of my affairs to any one, and especially to say that I am in England. I have the very strongest reasons for that.

¹ Lettres de Voltaire à l'Abbé Moussinot. Paris, 1775, page 26.

In the present critical situation of my affairs, it would be very imprudent for me to embark in the commerce with Pinega a large sum, which would be too long in yielding returns. Therefore, let us not invest in that commerce more than four or five thousand francs for our amusement; a like sum in pictures, which will amuse you still more. The paper of the farmers-general brings in six per cent. a year; it is the surest investment of money. Amuse yourself again in that. Buy some bonds. That merchandise will fall in a short time; at least, I think so; that is another honest recreation for a canon; and I leave to your intelligence everything that relates to those amusements. Besides, let us put into the hands of M. Michel, whose probity and fortune you know, one half of our ready money at five per cent., and not more; were it only for six months, that would produce something. In the matter of interest nothing must be neglected, and in investing our money we must always conform to the law of the prince. Let all that, like my other affairs, be a profound secret. Still eighteen francs to D'Arnaud, and two 'Henriades.' I see that I give you more trouble than all your chapter, but I shall not be so ungrateful."

[April 14, 1737.] "M. the Abbé de Breteuil has come here. He is in quest of some engravings for his rooms; if I have still half a dozen pretty enough, you will do me, my dear friend, the favor to send them. You will have the goodness to send with them a word or two, in the way of a note, to the effect that, having recommended that the engravings of mine which are left should be presented to him, you have but these, and he is requested to accept them. Besides the two thousand four hundred francs which you are to give to the Marquis du Châtelet, it is necessary to give him fifty livres. It is necessary also, my dear abbé, to find a man who will give us at Cirey twice a week a letter of news. I ask a thousand pardons, my generous correspondent, for the tiresome details of my commissions, but you must have pity upon country people, by whom you are tenderly loved."

[May, 1737.] "You are going, then, to Rouen, my dear treasurer? See, I pray you, the Marquis de Lézeau. Speak to him of the poverty of our cash-box. I am confident that you will induce him to pay; you have the gift of persuasion. It is, my dear abbé, of absolute necessity that I should know how it is that I have forgotten having given a receipt to M. the President d'Auneuil. It must be some one else who has given this receipt, and who has received the money for me; it is from the mouth of Demoulin that you can know whether this money has been received or not. Mesnil, the notary, delivered it; Demoulin ought to have received it. This man, who

robbed me of twenty thousand francs, and who is an ingrate, could he have pilfered also that half year's payment? It is necessary to address ourselves to those two individuals in order to know the truth; and if neither of them remember the facts it will be well that M. d'Auneuil should be informed that I know no more of the matter than they. In matters of interest and money we cannot be too careful and exact; we should foresee everything and guard against everything. M. de Richelieu owes only for one year; it is not proper to demand that year's interest at a time when he is paying me forty-three thousand two hundred francs. I would not hinder him, however, from giving me some ready money, if he wishes to do so; but I shall be very content with a good assignment, as well for the two thousand nine hundred livres of arrears which I am still to receive from him as for the annuity of four thousand francs which he pays me every year. In that case he would be importuned no more, and our affairs would be more according to rule and easier to manage. You can, my dear abbé, send by the coach, in perfect safety, three hundred louis well packed, without saying what they are and without expense, provided the box be well and duly registered as containing valuables; that will suffice. Besides these three hundred louis, I must have a draft for two thousand four hundred francs; the receiver-general of Champagne will give you this draft for your money. Any banker will tell you the name and residence of the receiver-general. I am ashamed of all the trouble I give you, and I am obliged to avow, my dear friend, that you were made to manage greater affairs than the treasury of a chapter of Saint Merri and the revenue of a philosopher who embraces you with all his heart. In this world one is rarely what he ought to be."

[May, 1737.] "The man who has the secret of spinning brass is not the only one; but I believe that only a little of it can be spun, and that it easily breaks. Sound this man of brass; we might be able to have him here, and give him a chamber, a laboratory, his board, and a salary of a hundred crowns. It would be in his power to make some experiments, and to try and make steel, which assuredly is much easier than to make gold. If he has the misfortune to seek the philosopher's stone, I am not surprised that from six thousand francs a year he is reduced to nothing. A philosopher who has six thousand francs a year has the philosopher's stone. That stone brings us, very naturally, to speak of affairs of interest. Here is the certificate which you ask for. I repeat to you my prayers that M. de Guise, M. de Lézeau, and others may be written to without delay; that you see M. Paris-Duverney, and let him know that he will give me great pleasure if he permits me to enjoy the pension from

the queen and from the royal treasury, of which I am in very great need, and for which I shall be much obliged. Be willing also, my dear abbé, to arrange, in some amiable way, my annuity, my capital overdue, and the arrears, with the steward of M. de Richelieu; the whole without betraying an unbecoming distrust. That ought to have been done more than a month ago. An assurance of regular payment would spare the duke disagreeable details, would deliver his steward from great embarrassment, would spare you, my dear friend, many useless steps, many fatiguing and unfruitful labors. We shall say more of this another time, for I am afraid of forgetting to ask you for a very good air-pump, which is hard to find; a good reflecting telescope, which is at least as rare; the volumes of pieces which have been crowned at the Academy. Such are the learned things which my little learned mind has very urgent need of. I have, my dear abbé, neither the time nor the strength to continue, nor even to thank you for the chemist whom you sent me. As yet, I have scarcely seen him, except at mass; he loves solitude; he ought to be content. I shall not be able to work with him in chemical matters until an apartment which I am building is finished; till then, we must each of us study apart, and you must love me always."

[May, 1737.] "It is necessary, my dear friend, to ask, to ask again, to press, to see, to importune, and not persecute my debtors for my annuities and arrears. A letter costs nothing; two are only a very trifling embarrassment, and serve the purpose that a debtor cannot complain if I am obliged to avail myself of legal means of redress. After two letters to the farmers at an interval of a month, and a little word of excuse to the masters, it will be necessary to issue formal demands to the farmers of the lands upon which my annuities are secured. I will send you the list of them. For the rest of my life it will be with the farmers that I shall have to do. That will be a much better plan. Pinga says everywhere that he is selling my effects, and that has a much worse effect than all I sell. I flatter myself, my dear friend, that you will keep much better the secret of all my affairs. You have, God be thanked, all the good qualities."

[May, 1737.] "Great thanks, my dear abbé, for the present given to La Mare, and the more because it is the last which my affairs permit me to accord him. If ever he comes to importune you, do not let him take up your time. Reply that you have nothing to do with my business; that cuts the matter short. Ascertain if it is true that this little gentleman, whom I have overwhelmed with benefits, rails also against me. Speak to Demoulin gently. He ought indeed to blush at his conduct towards me; he has deprived me of twenty thousand francs, and wishes to dishonor me. In losing twenty thousand francs

I need not acquire an enemy. Another request, my dear abbé. A friend, who asks of me an inviolable secrecy, charges me to ascertain what is the subject of the prize essay announced this year by the Academy of Sciences. I know no man more secret than you : it will be you, then, my dear friend, who will render us this service. If I were to write to some member of the Academy, he would think, perhaps, that I wished to compete for the prize ; that would suit neither my age nor my defective knowledge."

[June, 1737.] "Arm yourself with courage, my dear and amiable agent, for to-day I am going to be exceedingly troublesome. Here is a learned negotiation, in which it is necessary, if you please, that you succeed, and that I be not found out. A visit to M. de Fontenelle, and a long explanation upon what is understood by the propagation of fire. Disputants, among whom I sometimes take a fancy to thrust myself, discuss the question whether fire has or has not weight. M. Léméri, whose 'Chemistry' you sent me, asserts (chapter v.) that, after having calcined twenty pounds of lead, he found it increased in weight five pounds ; he does not say whether he weighed the earthen vessel in which the calcination was made, to ascertain if any carbon had joined itself to the lead ; he supposes simply, or rather boldly, that the lead has absorbed some particles of fire, which have augmented its weight. Five pounds of fire ! Five pounds of light ! That is admirable, and so admirable that I do not believe it. Other scientific men have made experiments with a view to ascertain the weight of fire. They have put filings of copper and filings of tin into glass retorts hermetically sealed ; they have calcined these filings, and they have found them increased in weight : an ounce of copper has acquired forty-nine grains, and an ounce of tin four grains. Antimony calcined by the rays of the sun, by means of the burning glass, has also increased in weight in the hands of the chemist, Homberg. I wish that all those statements may be true ; I wish that the matter in which the metals were held during calcination may not have contributed to increase the weight of those metals ; but I who speak to you have weighed more than a thousand pounds of red-hot iron, and I have afterwards weighed it cold. I have not found a grain of difference. Now it would be very curious that twenty pounds of lead, calcined, should gain five pounds in weight, and that a thousand pounds of red-hot iron should not weigh one grain the heavier. Such, my dear abbé, are the difficulties which for a month past have wearied the head of your friend, little accustomed to physical investigations, and rendered him uncertain in chemistry, just as other difficulties of a different order render him shaky upon some points little important of scholastic theology. In every science we seek the truth in good faith, and, when

we think we have found it, we are often embracing only an error. Now for the favor which I ask of you. Go to your neighbor, M. Geoffroy, apothecary to the Academy of Sciences; get into conversation with him by means of half a pound of quinquina, which you will buy and send to me. Ask him respecting the experiments of L meri, of Homberg, and mine. You are a very skillful negotiator; you will easily find out what M. Geoffroy thinks of all that, and you will tell me what he says, — the whole without committing me. I am, as you see, my dear friend, much occupied with physical matters; but I do not forget that superfluity which they name the necessary.¹ I hope that H bert will not delay to finish it, and that he will spare nothing in rendering it elegant and magnificent.”

[June 29, 1737.] “Are you willing, my dear friend, to pay a visit, long or short as you like, to M. Boulduc, a learned chemist? I am informed that he has made some experiments which tend to prove that fire does not augment the weight of bodies! The point is to have upon that subject a conversation with him. There is also a M. Grosse, who lives in the same building. He is also a chemist, very intelligent and very laborious. I pray you to ask both of these gentlemen what they think of the experiments of the lead calcined by ordinary fire, and of the metals calcined by the rays of the sun concentrated through the burning glass. They will feel it a pleasure to speak to you, to instruct you, and you will send me a statement of their philosophic instructions. This, my dear correspondent, is a commission much more amusing than to arrange a composition with the creditors of the Prince de Guise. That prince has always concealed from me the appointment of a commission for the liquidation of his debts. A life annuity ought to be sacred; he owes me three years’ income. A commission established by the king is not established for the purpose of frustrating the creditors. Life annuities ought certainly to be excepted from the operation of the laws most favorable to debtors of dishonest intentions. Speak of this, I pray you, to M. de Machault; and after having represented to him my right and the injury which I suffer, you will act as he will direct. It is essential for us to avail ourselves of legal methods, and it is proper to do so with all the consideration possible. Do not trust the positive promise of the Prince de Guise. The positive promises of princes are trifles, and his are worse.”

[June 30, 1737.] “Another little visit, my dear friend, to M. Geoffroy. Send him back, by means of some ounces of quinquina, or of senna, or of manna, or of anything else which you may be pleased to buy for your own health or for mine, — send him back, I tell you, to

¹ An allusion to Voltaire’s poem, the *Mondain*, verse 22.

the chapter of lead and the regulus of antimony increased in weight by calcination. He has told you, and it is true, that those substances lose the increase of weight after becoming cold again; but that is not enough. It is necessary to know if that weight is lost when the calcined body becomes simply cold again, or if it is lost when the calcined body has been afterwards melted. L  meri, who reports that twenty pounds of calcined lead weigh twenty-five pounds, adds that this lead remelted only weighs nineteen pounds. MM. Duclos and Homberg report that the regulus of iron and that of antimony calcined by the burning glass increased in weight; but that upon being melted afterwards by the same glass they lost both the weight which they had acquired and a little of their own. It is then not after having become cold that these bodies lose the weight added to their substance by the action of the fire. It would be necessary also to know if M. Geoffroy thinks that the igneous matter alone has caused this increase of weight; if the iron ladle with which they stirred during the operation, or if the vessel which contained the metal, did not increase the weight of that metal by transfusing into it some of its own substance. Ascertain, my dear friend, the opinion of the apothecary upon all these points, and send it to me quick. You are very capable of making this chemist talk, and all the chemists of the Academy, and of understanding them well. I count upon your friendship and discretion."

[July 6, 1737.] "It is a pleasure, my dear friend, to give you learned commissions, so well do you acquit yourself of them. No one could render service better or more promptly. I have just performed the experiment upon iron which the learned charcoal-burner, M. Grosse, advises. I weighed a piece of two pounds, which I made red-hot upon a tile in the open air. I weighed it red, I weighed it cold; it always weighed the same. I have been weighing every day lately iron and melted iron, flaming hot: I have weighed from two pounds to a thousand. So far from finding the weight of red-hot iron greater, I have found it much smaller, which I attribute to the furnace, prodigiously hot, which consumed some particles of iron. It is this which I pray you to communicate to M. Grosse when you see him; visit, then, promptly this gnome, and, with your usual precaution, consult him anew. He is a man well informed upon these subjects. Ascertain, then, 1st, if he believes that fire has weight; 2d, if the experiments made by M. Homberg and others ought to prevail over that of the iron red and iron cooled, which always weigh the same. We are surrounded, my dear abb  , with uncertainties of all possible kinds. The least truth gives us infinite pains to discover. 3d. Ask him if the burning glass of the Palais-Royal has the same effect upon matter exposed to the air as in the vacuum of the air-pump. Upon this point

you must make him talk a long time. Ask him the effects of the rays of the sun in that vacuum upon gunpowder, upon iron, upon liquors, upon metals, and make a little note of all the answers of this learned man. 4th. Ask him if the phosphorus of Boyle, the burning phosphorus, takes fire in a vacuum. Finally, ask if he has seen any good Persian naphtha, and if it is true that this naphtha burns in water. There you are, my dear abbé, a finished natural philosopher. I pester you terribly, for I still add that I am in a hurry for this information. I abuse your complaisance excessively, but in atonement I love you excessively."

[August, 1737.] "Every day, my dear friend, brings you, then, new importunity from me. Tell me, will it not be abusing your patience to pray you to see M. Grosse again, and to have with that celebrated chemist a new scientific conversation? See him, then, and have the goodness to ask that learned charcoal-burner if he has ever performed the experiment of plunging his thermometer in spirits of wine, in spirits of nitre, to see if the mercury rises in those liquors. I am, my dear abbé, always ashamed of my importunities; but spare neither carriages nor messengers, and always transact the affairs of your friend entirely at your ease."

[October, 1737.] "Is M. de Brézé quite solid? What do you think of it, my prudent friend? This article of interest having been maturely examined, take twenty thousand francs from M. Michel and give them to M. Brézé, at ten per cent. This investment will be the more agreeable, as we shall be paid easily and regularly upon the proceeds of his houses in Paris. Arrange this affair for the best; and, once arranged, if the estate of Spoix can be bought for fifty thousand francs, we shall find the money towards the month of April. We shall sell some bonds. We shall borrow at five per cent., which will not be difficult either to you or to me. Life is short; Solomon tells us we must enjoy it; I think to enjoy, and for that reason I feel within me a grand vocation to be gardener, plowman, and vine-dresser. Perhaps even I shall succeed better in planting trees, in digging the earth, and in making it fruitful than in composing tragedies, experimenting in chemistry, writing epic poems, and other sublime follies which make implacable foes. Give 'L'Enfant Prodigue'¹ to Prault for fifty louis d'or, — six hundred francs down, and a note for the other six hundred francs, payable when this unhappy *Enfant* shall see the light. This money will be employed in some good work. I do not rebel against my destiny, which is to have a little glory and some hisses."

[November, 1737.] "Your patience, my dear abbé, is going to

¹ Comedy by Voltaire.

be put to a severe proof; I tremble lest you may be unable to sustain it. I hope everything from your friendship. Affairs temporal, affairs spiritual, these are the two great subjects of the long babble with which I am about to trouble you. M. de Lézeau owes me three years; it is necessary to press him without too much importunity. A letter to the Prince de Guise; that costs nothing, and advances matters. The Villars and the D'Auneuils owe two years; it is necessary politely and nicely to remonstrate with those gentlemen touching their duties to their creditors. It is necessary also to finish with M. de Richelieu, and to consent to what he wishes. I should have some great objections to make upon what he proposes; but I love better a conclusion than an objection. Conclude, then, my dear friend; I trust myself blindly to your discretion, which is always very useful to me. Prault ought to give fifty francs to monsieur your brother. I wish him to do so. It is a trifling *bonus*, a bagatelle, which is part of my bargain; and when that bagatelle shall be paid, monsieur your brother will scold for me the negligent Prault, who in the parcels of books which I order always makes delays that try my patience cruelly; nothing that he sends me arrives at the time appointed. Monsieur your brother will then inquire of that bookseller, or of any other that he wishes, for a Puffendorf; for the chemistry of Boerhaave, the most complete edition; for a 'Letter upon the Divisibility of Matter,' published by Jomvert; for the 'Index of the Thirty-First Volume of the History of the Academy of Sciences;' for Marriotte upon the 'Nature of the Air;' the same author upon 'Cold and Heat;' for Boyle 'De Ratione inter Ignem et Flammam,' difficult to find: that is the affair of monsieur your brother. Other commissions: two reams of foolscap, the same of letter paper, — the whole of Holland; twelve sticks of Spanish sealing-wax for spirits of wine; a Copernican sphere; a burning glass of the largest size; my engravings of the Luxembourg; two globes mounted; two thermometers; two barometers (the longest are the best); two scales, well graduated; some crucibles; some retorts. In making purchases, my friend, always prefer the handsome and excellent, if a little dear, to a common article less costly.

"So much for the literary man who seeks to instruct himself after the Fontenelles, the Boyles, the Boerhaaves, and other learned men. What follows is for the material man, who digests very ill; who has need to take, as they tell him, plenty of exercise; and who, beside this need, of necessity has also some other needs of society. I pray you, in consequence, to buy for him a good fowling-piece; a pretty game-bag with appurtenances; a gun-hammer; a draw-charge; large diamond shoe-buckles; other diamond garter-buckles; twenty

pounds of hair powder; ten pounds of smelling powder; a bottle of essence of jasmin; two enormous pots of orange pomatum; two powder puffs; a very good knife; three fine sponges; three dusters; four bundles of quills; two pairs of toilet pincers, very nice; a pair of very good pocket scissors; two floor brushes; finally, three pairs of slippers, well furred; and, besides — I remember nothing more. Of all these make a parcel; two, if necessary; three, even, if necessary: your packer is excellent. Send the whole by way of Joinville; not to my address, for I am in England (I beg you to remember that), but to the address of Madame de Champonin. All that costs money, you will tell me; and where to get the money? Where you wish, my dear abbé. We have some bonds; we can convert them. We ought never to neglect anything for our pleasure, since life is short. I shall be entirely yours during that short life.”

[December, 1737.] “Instead of money which Prault owes me, my dear abbé, I have ordered some books of him. You tell me he is dissatisfied; I am surprised at it; he ought to know that an author never deprives himself of the right of foreign editions. As soon as a book is printed at Paris with privilege, the publishers of Holland seize it, and the first who prints it has the exclusive privilege in that country; and to have this right of printing it first it suffices to announce the work in the gazettes. It is an established usage, which holds the place of law. Now, when I wish to favor a publisher in Holland, I advertise him of the work which I am printing in France, and I endeavor to let him have the first copy, in order that he may get beforehand with the trade. I have then promised a Holland publisher that I will immediately send him a copy of the work in question, and I have promised him this little favor to indemnify him for the delay in finishing the elements of the philosophy of Newton, which he began to print nearly a year ago. The point is to hurry on Prault, in order at the same time to hasten the little advantage which will indemnify the Holland publisher, for whom I have an affection, and who is a very honest man. M. Prault knows very well that this is the point. His privilege is for France, and not for Holland. He has never done business except upon this footing, and on condition that the work should be printed at Paris and at Amsterdam simultaneously. To prevent all difficulty, send him this note, and let him put in it his reply. These are the facts, and I ask your pardon for this verbiage. Prault still owes fifty francs to monsieur your brother; I wish him to pay them. This is a new bonus which I beg your brother to accept. I pray him also to send me the old tragedy of ‘Cresphonte,’ and all the old books which I have noted upon the catalogue which he sent me.”

[Cambridge, December, 1737.] "I am very glad, my dear natural philosopher, that M. de Fontenelle has explained himself touching the propagation of fire. As the light of the sun is the most powerful fire which we know, it was natural to have some idées a little clear upon that elementary fire. It was the affair of a philosopher; the rest is a blacksmith's business. I am in the midst of forges, and the subject suits me well enough. I hope that Bronod will explain himself as clearly respecting the fifty louis of which you speak as M. de Fontenelle upon light. If Bronod does not pay this money, I believe it will be necessary to sell a bond. I see no great harm in that; one never loses his dividend. It is true that the price varies towards the time of their payment, that is to say, every six months; but that amounts to little; and, besides, it is better to sacrifice some pistoles that give you the trouble of calling again upon M. Bronod. The three louis which you gave finally to M. Robert were doubtless for the advances he has made. I cannot imagine that a solicitor has taken it into his head to incur expense for me, since I have had no law business, unless I have had a suit without knowing it. M. Michel wishes, then, to keep my money until the first of March? Be it so. Let him have it; it will be always two months' interest gained. Let us not disdain such pickings. Make, I pray you, if you think it necessary, a little present to the steward of M. de Richelieu; but before doing so we must have good security for my arrears, and security that henceforth I receive regularly four thousand francs a year. A louis d'or to D'Arnaud, without telling him either where I am or what I am doing; neither him nor any one else. I am at Cirey for you alone, and in Cochin China for all the Parisians; or, which will be more probable, confined in some province of England."

[December, 1737.] "The picture of myself drawn in pastel, my dear abbé, is horrible and wretched, whatever the engraver thinks; little do I care. I shall not take the part of my countenance, which I do not know too well; but, my dear friend, can they not make me less ugly? I leave that to your care; especially, do not speak of it to Madame du Châtelet. Let us come to the affair of this lady. See, as soon as possible, Hébert, and recommend to him the greatest diligence. You have given him fifty louis; give him fifty more if he demands them, and assure him that at the instant of delivery the whole shall be exactly paid. If, in accordance with my last letter, you have sold a bond, you have done well; if you have not sold one, still you have done well. I approve you in everything, because all that you do is always well done, and you deserve that I thank you and that I embrace you heartily."

[July 12, 1740.] "I received your letter of the 9th, in which you

inform me of the *general* bankruptcy of the receiver-general named Michel. A sufficiently large portion of my property is involved (40,000 francs). The Lord gave, the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. To suffer my ills in patience has been my lot for forty years; and one can submit to Providence without being a devotee. I confess that I did not expect this failure, and I do not understand how a receiver-general of the finances of his Most Christian Majesty, a very rich man, too, could fail so awkwardly, unless it is because he wished to be richer. In that case, M. Michel is doubly wrong. I could find it in my heart to cry, —

Michel, au nom de l'Eternel,
Met jadis le diable en dérouté;
Mais après cette banqueroute,
Que le diable emporte Michel.¹

“But this would be a poor jest, and I do not wish to make light either of M. Michel's losses or of my own. Nevertheless, my dear abbé, you will find the result to be that M. Michel's children will remain very rich, very well placed. . . . Have the goodness to speak to Michel's cashier; endeavor to get from him how we should proceed so as not to lose all. . . . Good-night; I embrace you with all my soul. Console yourself for the rout of Michel; your friendship consoles me for my loss.”²

[December, 1737.] “You speak to me, my dear abbé, of a good-man chemist, and I hear you with pleasure. Then you propose that I should take him into my service; I ask nothing better. He will enjoy here complete liberty, be not ill lodged, be well nourished, have great convenience for cultivating at his ease his talent as a chemist; but it is indispensable that he should know how to say mass on Sundays and festivals in the chapel of the château. This mass is a condition without which I could not engage him. I will give him a hundred crowns [*écus*] a year, but I can do nothing more. He must also be informed that we take our meals very rarely with the Marquise du Châtelet, whose meal-times are not very regular; but there is a table for the Count du Châtelet, her son, and his tutor, a man of understanding, served regularly at noon and at eight in the evening. M. du Châtelet, the elder, often eats at that table, and occasionally we all sup together. Besides, we enjoy here perfect liberty. For the present we can only give him a chamber with an ante-chamber. If he accepts my propositions, he can come and bring all his apparatus with him. If he is in need of money you can advance him

¹ Michael, in the name of the Eternal, formerly put the devil to rout; but, after this bankruptcy, may the devil fly away with Michael!

² Lettres de Voltaire à l'Abbé Moussinot, page 213.

a quarter, on condition that he starts at once. If he delays his departure, do not delay, my dear treasurer, to send me some money by the coach. Instead of two hundred and fifty louis, send boldly three hundred of them, with the books and the bagatelles I have asked for. For the rest, my dear friend, I take it for granted that your chemist is a man of sense, since you propose him. Tell me his name, for, really, I must know how he calls himself. If he makes Fahrenheit thermometers, he will make some here, and render service to natural philosophy. Are those thermometers of the same scale as Réaumur's? These instruments do not accord unless they sound the same octave."

[May, 1738.] "I would like, my dear abbé, a pretty little watch, good or bad, simple, of silver merely, with a cord of silk and gold. Three louis ought to pay for that. You will send it to me *subito*,¹ *subito*, by the coach. It is a little present which I wish to make to the son of M. the Marquis du Châtelet, a child ten years old. He will break it, but he wishes one, and I am afraid of being anticipated. I embrace you."

[June, 1738.] "The watch was just the thing. It was received with transport, and I thank you, my dear abbé, for taking so much pains."

¹ Quickly.

CHAPTER XXX.

LITERARY WORK AT CIREY.

AND now for the realization of the dream of peaceful, glorious toil, far from the distractions of the world, solaced every hour by love.

His first labors at Cirey, which were begun and continued amid crowds of workmen and heaps of litter, were of an abstract and thoughtful nature, inspired by Pope's "Essay on Man," then in the splendor of its first celebrity. Voltaire had received the early cantos in 1732, in time to insert a passage concerning them in his English Letters, and in 1734 came the completed work, in a quarto volume, with dedication to Lord Bolingbroke. It so moved and roused him that, while he had a princely wedding on his hands and a new love in his heart, while a *lettre de cachet* was on his track, while he was finishing a tragedy and writing a comedy, while he was restoring and furnishing a château, while he was in hiding at Brussels, his graver thoughts revolved the mighty themes touched in Pope's Essay. His seven "Discourses on Man," in verse, and his "Treatise on Metaphysics," in prose, contain the substance of those thoughts. Three of the Discourses were written in 1734, and the others in the three years following, as mood and opportunity favored.

The first of the Discourses turns upon the equality of human conditions: "Mortals are equal; their mask differs;" wealth has its drawbacks, and poverty its compensations. The second, upon Liberty, maintains that man makes or mars his own happiness. "Love truth, but pardon error. The mortal who goes astray is still a man and thy brother. Be wise for thyself alone, compassionate for him. Achieve thine own welfare by blessing others." The third Discourse declares that the chief obstacle to human happiness is envy. "Take revenge upon a rival by surpassing him." The fourth inculcates

the truth that excess is fatal to enjoyment, and moderation one of the inflexible conditions of happiness. "To desire all is the mark of a fool; excess is his portion. Moderation is the treasure of the wise; he knows how to control his tastes, his labors, his pleasures." "Work is often the father of pleasure; I pity the man overwhelmed with the weight of his own leisure. Happiness is a good that nature sells us." The fifth Discourse is upon the Nature of Pleasure, and shows that pleasure is the lure that God uses to make us execute his purposes, and is therefore not to be placed under the ban of religion. "Calvin,—that fool, sombre and severe." "It is necessary to be a man before being a Christian." "Without the attraction of pleasure, who would submit to the laws of Hymen?" The sixth Discourse, upon the Nature of Man, is a confession that man knows very little of his nature, but must make the best of it, and bear in mind that perfect felicity can never be the lot of mortal. "One day some mice said to one another, 'How charming is this world! What an empire is ours! This palace so superb was built for us; from all eternity God made for us these large holes. Do you see those fat hams under that dim ceiling? They were created there for us by Nature's hands; those mountains of lard, eternal aliment, will be ours to the end of time. Yes, we are, great God, if our sages tell us the truth, the masterpiece, the end, the aim, of all thy works. Cats are dangerous and prompt to devour, but it is to instruct and correct us.'" The seventh and last of these Discourses is upon True Virtue. "The miracles are good; but to relieve a brother, to draw a friend from the depths of misery, to pardon the virtues of our enemies,—these are greater miracles." "The true virtue, then, is 'beneficence;' a new word in the French language, but the whole universe ought to cherish the idea."

The seven poems—fluent, light, witty, brief, often wise and salutary—are surcharged with the Voltairean essence; not anti-Christian, but anti-Pascal. They are such as Horace might have written if he had had seventeen Christian centuries behind him, instead of before him. Their airy lightness and grace made them universally read, and they will doubtless retain their power when Voltaire and Pascal at last meet in a religion that will include and honor both.

A line of the Discourse upon the Nature of Man gives us one of Voltaire's maxims of the art of writing: "The secret of wearying your reader is to tell him all."

During the first years of his residence at the château, the reading of one of these Discourses was frequently part of the evening entertainment provided for a guest, followed, perhaps, by a new canto of the "Pucelle;" and nothing is more certain than that, in polite circles, the two readings were considered equally legitimate and proper. Such were the château manners of the time.

A graver and longer work, in prose, the "Treatise upon Metaphysics," was also written amid the confusion of settling at Cirey. This Treatise is a simple and clear statement of the author's convictions concerning man, God, immortality, the freedom of the will, the nature of the soul, man's duty, and the sources of his welfare. When Madame de Rupelmonde, many years before, asked him what she ought to think on such subjects, he replied by a sprightly deistical poem. Probably the Marquise du Châtelet had asked him a similar question, and this seventy-five-page pamphlet was such a reply as he would have made to a lady fond of mathematics and accustomed to read Locke. There is only one dull or repellent word in the piece, and that is its title, which has doubtless kept many persons from looking farther. In his own chatty, irresistible manner, he draws the idlest reader on, while he gives his reasons for thinking that men cannot be descended from a single pair, and must have been created by a God. *The watch proves the watchmaker* was his constant argument for the existence of God, at every period of his life, and he developed it in this Treatise some years before Paley was born. While admitting God, he denies providence. The universe is governed by laws which nothing can change, — laws as invariable as those of mathematics. Revelation, other than that of science, he rejects with his usual gayety and scorn, — a revelation that "tells the Jews how they shall go to the *garde-robe*, but is silent upon the soul and immortality!" "I do not assert," he says, "that I have demonstrations against the spirituality and immortality of the soul; but all the probabilities are against those doctrines." In treating of the nature of virtue, he lays down this simple proposition: Virtue is conduct which benefits the community; vice is conduct which injures the community.

Lying, for example, is generally a vice, because it is of the greatest importance that men should be able to believe and trust one another. "But how often does lying become an heroic virtue?" To shrink from a lie when it would save a friend from deadly peril would be, he says, shameful dereliction. As to religion, he plainly reveals his conviction that, as then established in Europe, it was a system of spoliation and oppression, the despot's main support and defense. Every desolator of the earth began his work of massacre and ruin by solemn acts of religion, and, while the ground still smoked with carnage, hastened to the temple to repeat those solemn acts. Nor was religion necessary as an ally of virtue, since men conspicuous for unbelief, like Bayle, Locke, Spinoza, Shaftesbury, Collins, and others, were men of rigid virtue. "Much to be pitied are they who need the help of religion to be honest men."

Such was the famous "Treatise upon Metaphysics." Its chief merit was its tone of candor, moderation, and modesty. He stated, and evidently felt, the difficulties attending every solution of the vast enigma, and how inadequate were the faculties of man to penetrate the mysteries of life, growth, and death. He wrote it in 1734, when science was not yet groping toward the central secret, and when few men could offer a conjectural, or state an hereditary, solution without some mixture of passion or bias fatal to the development of truth. He uttered his real thoughts. He wrote without cant, without arrogance, without passion, and without fear.

It is interesting to notice how he returned in this work to the point where the Roman poet, Lucretius, left off, about the year 50 B. C. As Lucretius surveyed the Roman Empire and interpreted human life in it, so did Voltaire survey and interpret the Roman Catholic empire, of which he was a part. Lucretius spoke of "the life of man lying abject and foully groveling, crushed beneath the weight of a Religion that lowered over mortals with terrible aspect, until Epicurus rose to make a stand against her." "Him neither tales of gods, nor thunder-bolts, nor heaven itself with its threatening roar, repressed, but roused all the more the active energy of his soul, so that he should desire to be the first to break the close bars of nature's portals." ¹

¹ Lucretius on the Nature of Things. Rome, about 50 B. C. Bohn's edition. London, 1872. Book I, page 6.

Voltaire's Treatise could not, of course, be published just then. The manuscript lay among his papers at this period, with other perilous material, to keep Madame du Châtelet in alarm. We are too familiar with such opinions now to be able to feel how frightfully explosive the little book was. We have learned, and Europe is learning, that the most prodigious bombshell can explode harmlessly out-of-doors, with red flags duly placed. We have learned that publicity, like the winds of heaven, is a perfect disinfectant, as well as a good seed-sower. But in 1735 there was terror in a manuscript like this, as in a loaded shell on a centre-table, or a bottle of phosphorus in a medicine chest.

While occupied thus with works and thoughts traceable in some degree to his residence in England, he was delighted to learn that his hospitable friend Falkener, now Sir Everard Falkener, had been appointed English ambassador to Constantinople. He wrote to congratulate him, using such English as he had left after seven years of disuse: —

[September 18, 1735.] "MY DEAR FRIEND! Your new title will change neither my sentiments, nor my expressions. My dear Falkener! friendship is full of talk, but it must be discreet. In the hurry of business you are in, remember only I talk'd to you, about seven years ago, of that very same embassy. Remember I am the first man who did foretell the honour you enjoy. Believe then no man is more pleased with it than I am. I have my share in your happiness. If you pass through France in your way to Constantinople, I advise you I am but twenty leagues from Calais, almost in the road to Paris. The castle is called Cirey, four miles from Vassy en Champagne on Saint-Dizier's road, and eight miles from Saint-Dizier. The post goes thither. There lives a young lady called the marquise Du Châtelet, whom I have taught english to, and who longs to see you. You will lie here, if you remember your friend."¹

The ambassador went to Constantinople by sea, and so missed the delights of Cirey. Soon after he was settled at Constantinople, Voltaire wrote to him again, and in better English: —

[February 22, 1736.] "Now the honest, the good and plain philosopher of Wandsworth, represents his king and country, and is equal

¹ 1 Lettres Inédites de Voltaire, 75 and 84.

to the Grand-Seignior. Certainly England is the only country where commerce and virtue are to be rewarded with such an honour. If any grief [concern] rests still upon my mind, my dear friend (for friend you are, tho' a minister), it is that I am unable to be a witness of your new sort of glory and felicity. Had I not regulated my life after a way which makes me a kind of *solitaire*, I would fly to that nation of savage slaves, whom I hate, to see the man I love. What would my entertainment be! and how full the overflowings of my heart, in contemplating my dear Falkener, amidst so many Infidels of all hues, smiling with his humane philosophy at the superstitious follies that reign on the one side at Stamboul, and on the other at Galata! I would not admire, as my lady Mary Worthley Montagu says,

The vizir proud, distinguished from the rest;
Six slaves in gay attire, his bridle hold,
His bridle rich with gems, his stirrups gold!

“For, how the devil! should I admire a slave upon a horse? My friend Falkener I should admire!

“But I must bid adieu! to the great town of Constantin, and stay in my little corner of the world, in that very same castle where you were invited to come in your way to Paris, in case you should have taken the road of Calais to Marseille. Your taking an other way, was certainly a sad disappointment for me, and especially to that lady who makes use of your Locke and of more of your other books. Upon my word! a French lady who reads Newton, Locke, Addison, and Pope, and who retires from the bubbles and the stunning noise of Paris, to cultivate in the country the great and amiable genius she is born with, is more valuable than your Constantinople and all the Turkish empire!

“You may confidently write to me, by the way of Marseille, *chez madame la marquise Du Châtelet, à Cirey, en Champagne*. Be sure I shall not stir from that spot of ground, before the favour of your letter comes to me. . . . What I long to be informed of is, whether you are as happy as you seem to be. Have you got a little private *seraglio*? or, are you to be married? Are you over-stoked with business? Does your indolence or laziness comply with your affairs? Do you drink much of that good Cyprus wine? For my part, I am here too happy, though my health is ever very weak:

Excepto quod non simul esses, cætera lætus.

“Addio! mio carissimo ambasciadore! Addio! le baccio umilmente le mani! L'amo, e la reversico!”¹

¹ Adieu, my dearest ambassador; adieu, I kiss very humbly the hands of your lordship. I love and honor you.

He continued to correspond with the ambassador, always in the same tone.

Another dramatic success, and one of great splendor, fell to his lot in January, 1736, while he was absent from the scene. "Alzire, or the Americans," was the name of the new tragedy, the scene of which was laid in that land so exceedingly remote then from the knowledge of Europeans,—Peru. The attention of Europe had been just drawn to that country by the expedition sent thither by the French Academy of Sciences to measure an arc of the meridian, with a view to ascertain the precise form of the earth. Voltaire's old friend, Condamine, was one of the party. "Alzire," moreover, was similar to "Zaïre" in contrasting two civilizations and two religions, and in affording opportunity for striking costume and barbaric magnificence. During the turbulent period, when the poet was battling with ministers at Paris and masons at Cirey, Thieriot, as it seems, talked of the new play in an exulting strain, in the hearing of Le Franc, a young author, who had recently made a dramatic success of much promise with his tragedy of "Didon." Le Franc at once wrote a Peruvian tragedy, and read it to the actors, who accepted it with joy. Voltaire was not the person to allow poaching on any manor of his. He wrote a witheringly polite, ingenious letter to the comedians, stating his case, and modestly claiming to have his play, such as it was, produced first, since he had originated the subject, and since no play of *his* could have the least chance of success if performed after that of M. Le Franc, who was in all the vigor and brilliancy of youth.

M. Le Franc was obliged to stand aside and wait. "Alzire" was performed January 27, 1736; with perfect success, the first of a long line of Peruvian plays. For twenty successive nights—a great run then—it was repeated to houses averaging 2682 francs; it was performed twice at court; it remained a popular piece during the rest of the century, and, indeed, until the later development of the French drama rendered that mode of dramatic presentation obsolete. It need not be said that this play teemed with the Voltairean message from end to end. That message was repeated in notes, in prefaces, and in the elaborate dedication to Madame du Châtelet. "The religion of a barbarian," says the Discourse

Preliminary, "consists in offering to his gods the blood of his enemies. An ill-instructed Christian is often little more reasonable. To be faithful to some useless observances, and unfaithful to the true duties of man; to offer certain prayers, and retain his vices; to fast, but hate; to cabal, to persecute, — such is his religion. That of the true Christian is to regard all men as his brothers; to do them good, and pardon their ill-doing."

It is noticeable that, in his public dedication of the work, he makes no secret that it was written in Madame du Châtelet's house, and that he hopes to live there, "near her, for the rest of his life," in the cultivation of literature and the search for truth, "to which she has sacrificed in her youth the false but enchanting pleasures of the world."

"Alzire" was still fresh in the recollection of play-goers when an event occurred at the Théâtre-Français that kept all the cafés talking for a week, and has made a good café and green-room tradition ever since. It was the 10th of October, 1736. The play advertised for that evening was Racine's "Britannicus." The audience was assembled, and the time for beginning had come. A member of the company appeared before the curtain, and addressed the audience. An actress, he said, who was cast in a leading part of "Britannicus" had become suddenly indisposed, and the play could not be presented. But, most fortunately, a new five-act comedy, in verse, by an anonymous author, was in readiness, though not yet announced; and, if the audience pleased, it would be given instead of the tragedy. The comedy was called "The Prodigal Son" (*L'Enfant Prodigue*). What audience could object to such unexpected good fortune? The piece was played. It was received with the warmest applause, announced for repetition, continued to be given, with an interruption, for thirty nights, and thus thrust upon the cafés of Paris an agitating problem. Who could have written it? Not Piron, surely. Perhaps Destouches. Probably Gresset. Gresset, no doubt, was the rumor for some days. Voltaire? Out of the question!

The astute reader knows, of course, that the author was managing this comedy within a comedy from the castle of Cirey, in "St. Dizier's road," in Champagne. When that

author was showing himself in Paris, in the spring of 1735, he supped one evening with Mademoiselle Quinault, a leading actress of the Théâtre-Français. She chanced to mention that she had seen lately a dramatic sketch at a Fair theatre, which, coarse and crude as it was, had in it the germ of a good comedy, and that she was going to suggest it as a subject to Destouches. She gave an account of the plot: Two sons: one of them merry and wild, but noble, the other a steady-going, miserly dastard; both attracted to the same lovely girl, one by true love, the other by her large dowry; at the end, the true lover winning the prize. Voltaire listened in silence, thinking, perhaps, that he knew two such brothers in Paris. The next morning, early, he was at Mademoiselle Quinault's door. "Have you spoken to Destouches of 'The Prodigal Son'?" She had not. He drew from his pocket the plan of a comedy upon the subject, which she approved, and urged him to complete. Mindful, it may be, of his Peruvian adventure, he imposed absolute secrecy as to the authorship, and afterwards devised the little scheme of substituting the comedy for the tragedy.

We see by his letters of this time that he was more intent upon the success of his scheme of concealment than he was upon the success of the play. Two passages from these letters have been frequently quoted against him, and they are in truth characteristic, and could not be fairly omitted. To one intimate friend, M. Berger, who was in the secret, he wrote thus: "You can assure MM. La Roque and Prévost [editors] that I am not the author of the play. Get them to publish a statement to this effect in their periodicals, in case it should be necessary. . . . If by chance the secret of 'The Prodigal Son' escapes, swear always that I am not the author. To lie for a friend is friendship's first duty." Three days after he wrote thus to Thieriot: "Lying is a vice only when it does harm; it is a very great virtue when it does good. Be, then, more virtuous than ever. It is necessary to lie like a devil; not timidly, not for a time, but boldly and always. What does it matter that this censorious public should know whom to punish for having put upon the stage a Croupillac? Let it hiss her if she has no merit, but let the author remain unknown, I conjure you, in the

name of the tender friendship which has united us for twenty years." This we might accept, if he had only laid down an infallible rule, adapted to average human capacity, for distinguishing between lies that do good and lies that do harm.

These plays, these poems, these treatises upon the problems of life and destiny, were not all the literary work done by him in these years. His favorite scheme was still the history of the reign of Louis XIV., which he meant to write on a system unattempted yet in prose or verse: that of dwelling upon things of real and lasting importance, and passing as lightly as possible over wars, quarrels, controversies, and conquests. His letters on this subject show him in a different light from that cast by those just quoted. Here he is the faithful servant of truth. To the same Thieriot, as to many others, he writes thus on the plan and spirit of this long-projected work: —

“When I asked you for anecdotes upon the age of Louis XIV., it was less upon the king himself than the arts which flourished in his reign. I should prefer details relating to Racine and Boileau, to Quinault, Sully, Molière, Lebrun, Bossuet, Poussin, Descartes, and others, than to the battle of Steinkerque. Nothing but a name remains of those who commanded battalions and fleets; nothing results to the human race from a hundred battles gained; but the great men of whom I have spoken prepared pure and durable delights for generations unborn. A canal that connects two seas, a picture by Poussin, a beautiful tragedy, a discovered truth, are things a thousand times more precious than all the annals of the court, than all the narratives of war. You know that with me great men rank first; heroes last. *I call great men all those who have excelled in the useful or the agreeable.* The ravagers of provinces are mere heroes.”

The true Voltaire speaks in these lines; it was so that he felt all the days of his life.

Two of the forty arm-chairs of the French Academy fell vacant this year. The author of “Alzire” was not thought of as a candidate for either of them. He did not even regard himself as an available candidate; and the reason was plain enough to the literary cafés of the capital. The same cafés soon knew why the author of “The Prodigal Son” had so

sedulously concealed himself; or, as Madame du Châtelet expressed it, why that Prodigal was an orphan. In March, 1736, he received a letter from Jore, bookseller of Rouen, bastilled and ruined by the English Letters, telling him that the ministry was disposed to relent toward him and restore his license, provided he would state the whole truth respecting that publication. He asked for particulars, which Voltaire gave with simplicity and truth; going over the whole history of the work, from Thieriot's taking it to England to the pirated Paris edition, published during the author's absence, which caused the arrest and ruin of Jore and his own flight from France. This letter, in which he frankly owned himself the author of the book, placed him in the power of Jore, who answered it by demanding to be paid the cost of the confiscated edition, fourteen hundred francs. The author, indignant, but alarmed, hastened to Paris, saw the bookseller, and denied the justice of his claim, but offered half the sum demanded. Jore refused; brought suit; threw himself into the arms of Desfontaines, editor of a literary journal hostile to Voltaire; and published a *factum*, probably written by Desfontaines, in which he gave a history of his connection with the poet, related with highly effective perversity. The scandal was immense. Injudicious friends advised compromise at any cost; and, finally, the lieutenant of police, with the approval of the ministry, decided the matter thus: Jore's claim not allowed; Voltaire to give him five hundred francs as charity (*aumônes*). "It is to sign my shame," said Voltaire; "I would rather go on with the suit than pay." But he signed and paid, nevertheless. A year or two after, Jore confessed that he had been used and misled by others; he made profuse apologies, and drew a small pension from Voltaire as long as he lived. "The malice of your enemies," said he, "has only served to make me know the goodness of your character."¹

The effect upon the public of this scandalous affair was exceedingly bad. The author labored under peculiar disadvantages, since he had formally disavowed the work, and the decree against him of the parliament of Paris was still in force. He held his freedom on sufferance. He was in a corner where effective battle was impossible, and a thought-

¹ Jore to Voltaire, December 20, 1738. 1 Œuvres, 262.

less public, imperfectly informed, saw nothing in the matter except a paltry squabble between a very rich and a very poor man about a sum of money, of no importance to the one, and of great importance to the other. The history of this single case suffices to refute the light passage upon lying given above. It is not in mortal ken to discern what falsehood is harmless and what falsehood is destructive.

After wasting ten weeks in Paris upon this sorry business, he returned, in July, 1736, to Cirey, not in the best spirits, and well aware that it would be unwise in him to give his "Prodigal Son" a father of so dubious a reputation as his own. He saw the two chairs of the Academy assigned to his inferiors, and he was all too conscious that the Rousseaus and the Desfontaines, the Jansenists and the bigots of his world, did not repine at the national slight put upon him.

CHAPTER XXXI.

FREDERIC, PRINCE ROYAL OF PRUSSIA.

CONSOLATION brief but keenly felt awaited him at Cirey. In August, 1736, soon after his return from Paris, a long letter reached the château, addressed to himself, and signed, Frederic, Prince Royal of Prussia. A year or two before, when he was settling at Cirey, he had received from the Duke of Holstein, heir presumptive of the throne of Russia, husband of Catherine II., an invitation to reside at the Russian capital upon a revenue of ten thousand francs a year. He had just then come under the spell of Madame du Châtelet. "Persecuted as I was," he wrote to Thieriot, "I would not have left Cirey for the throne of Russia itself." He politely declined the offer; hoping, as he said, that "the Keeper of the Seals would less persecute a man who refused such establishments in foreign countries." Doubtless, he found means to convey both the information and the hint to that minister.

The letter of Frederic was the warm outpouring of a young and generous heart toward the poet who had given it its noblest pleasures, toward the instructor who had nourished its best aspirations. The prince, then twenty-four, had lived through his storm and stress period. The miseries and shames brought upon his sister and himself by the collision between their willful, obstinate mother and their father's arbitrary disposition, predisposed to frenzy by alcohol and tobacco, were at an end. The Prince Royal was then a married man, living in peace and dignity at a spacious and suitable house in the country, where he exercised his regiment, played the flute, worked his air-pump, read Voltaire, and tried — how hard he tried! — to write such French verses as Voltaire wrote. He was in the habit of sending letters to the French authors, to whom he had owed much of the alleviation of his hard lot; and now he wrote to Voltaire, to whom he felt that he owed

most. Here is the first of his letters, entire, — the first of a correspondence that includes about five hundred letters, and lasted, with occasional interruptions, for forty-two years, even to the last weeks of Voltaire's life : —

[August 8, 1736.] “Monsieur, although I have not the satisfaction of knowing you personally, you are not the less known to me by your works. They are treasures of the mind, if one may so express himself, composed of pieces wrought with so much taste, delicacy, and art that their beauties appear new every time they are read. I believe I have discerned in them the character of their gifted author, who does honor to our age and to the human intellect. Great moderns will one day owe it to you, and to you alone, in case the dispute whether the preference is due to them or the ancients is ever renewed, that the balance will incline to their side.

“You add to the quality of excellent poet an infinitude of other kinds of knowledge, which, in truth, have some affinity with poetry, but which have not been treated poetically, except by your pen. Never did poet before set to music metaphysical thoughts; the honor of having done so first was reserved for you. It is the taste you show in your writings for philosophy that induces me to send you the translation I have made of the indictment and defense of J. M. Wolf, the most celebrated philosopher of our day, who, for having carried the light into the darkest places of metaphysics, and for having treated those difficult matters in a style as lofty as it is precise and clear, is cruelly accused of irreligion and atheism. Such is the destiny of great men; their superior genius always exposes them to the envenomed darts of calumny and envy.

“I am at present having translated the ‘Treatise upon God, the Soul, and the World,’ from the same author. I shall send the work to you, monsieur, as soon as it is finished; and I am sure that the force of the reasoning will strike you in all his propositions, which follow one another geometrically, and are joined like the links of a chain.

“The kindness and support you bestow upon all who devote themselves to the arts and sciences make me hope that you will not exclude me from the number of those whom you find worthy of your instruction; for thus I name your correspondence, which cannot but be profitable to every thinking being. I dare even to go so far as to say, without derogating from the merits of others, that in the entire universe there are no individuals of whom you could not be the instructor. Without lavishing upon you incense unworthy to be offered you, I can say that I find beauties without number in your works.

Your 'Henriade' charms me, and triumphs happily over the ill-judged criticism which has been made upon it. The tragedy of 'Cæsar' exhibits to us characters well sustained; the sentiments of the play are all magnificent and grand; and we feel that Brutus is either Roman or English. 'Alzire' adds to the charm of novelty a happy contrast between the manners of savages and Europeans. You show by the character of Gusman that Christianity, ill understood and guided by false zeal, renders men more barbarous and more cruel than paganism itself.

"Corneille, the great Corneille, he who drew to himself the admiration of his whole period, if he were to return to life in our days, would see with astonishment, and perhaps with envy, that the tragic Muse lavishes upon you the favors of which she was miserly towards him. What may we not expect from the author of so many masterpieces! What new marvels may not come from the pen which once delineated, with so much spirit and elegance, the 'Temple of Taste'!

"This it is which makes me desire so ardently to possess all your works. I pray you, monsieur, to send them to me, and to communicate them without reserve. If among your manuscripts there is one which, from necessary prudence, you deem it best to conceal from the eyes of the public, I promise to keep it inviolably secret, and to be content with applauding it myself. I know, unhappily, that the faith of princes is a thing little respectable in our time; but I hope, nevertheless, that you will not allow yourself to be possessed by a general prejudice, and that you will make an exception in my favor.

"I shall believe myself richer in having your works than in the possession of all the transient and contemptible gifts of fortune, which the same chance gives and takes away. One can render your works his own by the aid of memory, and they will last as long as memory itself. Knowing the imperfection of mine, I hesitate long before making choice of the things which I judge worthy to place in it.

"If poetry were still upon its old footing, — that is to say, if poets knew only how to trill tedious idyls, eclogues cast in the same moulds, insipid stanzas, or, at their highest flight, to chant an elegy, I should renounce it forever; but you ennoble that art; you show us new paths and routes unknown to the Lefrancis and the Rousseaus.

"Your poems have qualities which render them respectable, and worthy the admiration and study of honest people. They form a course of morals wherein one can learn to think and to act. Virtue is painted therein in the most beautiful colors. The idea of true glory is clearly defined in them; and you insinuate a taste for the sciences in a manner so fine and so delicate that whoever has read

your works cherishes the ambition to follow your footsteps. How many times have I not said to myself, 'Unhappy man, lay down a burden the weight of which is beyond your strength; no one can imitate Voltaire unless it be Voltaire himself'!

"At such moments I have felt that the advantages of birth, and the halo of grandeur so flattering to our vanity, are things of very small account, or, in truth, of no account at all. They are distinctions foreign to ourselves, which adorn only the exterior. How far preferable to them are mental gifts! What do we not owe to persons whom Nature herself has distinguished by merely making them what they are! She pleases herself in forming some men whom she endows with all the capacity necessary for carrying forward the arts and sciences; and it is for princes to recompense their toils. Ah, would that it might fall to my lot to crown your triumphs with the glory they merit! I should only fear that this country, not fertile in laurel, would not furnish as much as your works deserve.

"If my destiny does not favor me so far as to enable me to possess you, I can at least hope some day to see one whom I have admired so long and from so great a distance, and to assure you with the living voice that I am, with all the esteem and the consideration due to those who, following the torch of truth, consecrate their labors to the public weal, monsieur, your affectionate friend,

"FREDERIC, PRINCE ROYAL OF PRUSSIA."

The arrival of this letter was well timed to enhance its effect. Eulogium of this kind had been familiar to him from his youth, and even eulogium from princes; but this prince was about to reign! He was to reign over a country in close proximity to France, and no Keeper of the Seals could choose to disregard him. His "ogre of a father," as Madame du Châtelet was pleased to style the Prussian king, was not a "good life," with his deep drinking, his tobacco parliament, and his explosions of drunken fury. The time was obviously not distant when the guard of four thousand giants would be disbanded, and a prince ascend the throne who would at once begin a millennium in Prussia that might spread over Europe. So thought Voltaire, in the enthusiasm of the hour. What princes he had seen in his own country! How insensible to the true glory of rulers! A regent of France had shut him up in the Bastille for eleven months upon a groundless charge; a Duke of Bourbon had seen him imprisoned and exiled for a happy and just repartee; the present king had not recognized

his existence, and allowed his best works to be put under ban. At the very moment when this letter was placed in his hands he was not, as we shall see in a moment, safe in his bed, and he owed his late impunity, not to any merit of his own, but, as a minister had recently said, "to the respect felt by the administration for "the family that gave him an *asylum*." Voltaire replied thus to the Prince Royal: —

[August 26, 1736.] "Monseigneur, I should be wanting in sensibility not to be infinitely touched by the letter with which your Royal Highness has deigned to honor me. My self-love was too much flattered by it; but my love for the human race, which I have always had at heart, and which I venture to say makes my character, gave me a pleasure a thousand times purer when I discovered that there is in the world a prince who thinks like a man, a prince philosopher, who will render men happy.

"Permit me to say to you that there is not a man on earth who does not owe you grateful homage for the care you take to cultivate by sound philosophy a soul born to command. Be sure that there have been no truly good kings except those who have begun, like you, by instructing themselves, by knowing men, by loving the truth, by detesting persecution and superstition. There is no prince who, being thus formed, could not bring back the age of gold to his states. Why do so few kings seek this advantage? You know, Monseigneur: it is because almost all of them think more of royalty than of humanity. You do precisely the contrary. Rely upon it, if one day the tumult of business and the wickedness of men do not alter so divine a character, you will be adored by your people and beloved by the whole world. Philosophers worthy of the name will fly to your dominions; and, as celebrated artisans go in crowds to the country where their art is most esteemed, men who think will go to gather about your throne.

"The illustrious Queen Christina left her kingdom to go in quest of the arts; reign, Monseigneur, and the arts will go in quest of you.

"May you never be disgusted with the sciences by the quarrels of the learned! You see, Monseigneur, by the very things you deign to send me, that they are men, for the most part, like courtiers themselves. They are sometimes as selfish, as intriguing, as false, as cruel; and all the difference between the pests of the court and the pests of the schools is that the latter are the more ridiculous.

"It is very sad for humanity that those who claim to declare the commands of Heaven, to be the interpreters of the Divinity, — in one word, the theologians, — are sometimes the most dangerous of all; that

there should be some among them who are as pernicious to society as they are obscure in their ideas; and that their souls should be swollen with bitterness and pride in proportion as they are empty of truth. They would be willing to disturb the peace of the earth for a sophism, and would interest all kings to avenge by sword and fire the honor of an argument *in ferio* or *in barbara*.

“Every thinking being who is not of their opinion is an atheist; and every king who does not favor them will be damned. You know, Monseigneur, that the best course one can take is to abandon to themselves those pretended preceptors and real enemies of the human race. Their words, when they are disregarded, are lost in the air like the wind; but if the weight of authority is enlisted in their support, that wind acquires a force which sometimes overturns the throne.

“I see, Monseigneur, with the natural joy of a heart filled with love for the public good, the immense distance which you put between men who peacefully seek the truth and those who wish to go to war for words which they do not understand. I see that the Newtons, the Leibnitz, the Bayles, the Lockes, souls so elevated, so enlightened, and so gentle, are those who nourish your spirit, and that you reject other sham aliment which you find poisoned or without substance.

“I do not know how to thank your Royal Highness enough for your goodness in sending me the little book concerning M. Wolf. I regard his metaphysical ideas as doing honor to the human intellect. They are flashes in the midst of profound night, which, I believe, is all we can hope from metaphysics. There is no appearance that the first principles of things will ever be well understood. The mice which inhabit some little holes of an immense building know not if that building is eternal, nor who was its architect, nor why that architect built. They try to preserve their lives, to people their holes, and to escape the destructive animals that pursue them. We are mice, and the divine architect who has built this universe has not yet, as far as I know, told his secret to any of us. If any one might pretend to divine the truth, it is M. Wolf. He may be combated, but he must be esteemed. His philosophy is very far from being pernicious; there is nothing in it more beautiful or more true than his remark that men ought to be just, though even they should have the misfortune to be atheists.

“The protection which, it seems, you give, Monseigneur, to that learned man is a proof at once of your justice and your humanity.

“You have the goodness, Monseigneur, to promise to send me the ‘Treatise upon God, the Soul, and the World.’ What a present, Monseigneur, and what a transaction! The heir of a monarchy deigns, from the recesses of his palace, to send instruction to a hermit!

Deign to make me this present, Monseigneur ; my extreme love for the truth is the only thing which renders me worthy of it. Most princes dread to hear the truth, and you will teach it.

“With regard to the verses of which you speak to me, you think upon that art as sensibly as upon all the rest. Verses which do not teach men new and affecting truths little deserve to be read. You feel that there would be nothing more contemptible than to pass one’s life in putting into rhyme stale commonplaces which do not merit the name of thoughts. If there is anything lower than that, it is to be nothing but a satirical poet, and write only to decry others. Such poets are to Parnassus what those doctors are to the schools who are acquainted only with words, and cabal against men who write things.

“If the ‘Henriade’ has not displeased your Royal Highness, I ought to thank for it the love of truth my poem inspires, and the horror for the factious, for persecutors, for the superstitious, for tyrants, and for rebels. It is the work of an honest man ; it ought to find favor with a prince philosopher.

“You order me to send you my other works. I shall obey you, Monseigneur ; you shall be my judge, and you shall stand to me in lieu of the public. I shall submit to you what I have hazarded in philosophy ; your luminous comments will be my recompense ; it is a reward that few sovereigns can give. I am sure of your secrecy ; your virtue, I do not doubt, equals your knowledge.

“I should regard it as a very great good fortune to be able to pay my court to your Royal Highness. We go to Rome to see churches, pictures, ruins, and bas-reliefs. A prince like you deserves a journey much better ; it is a rarity more marvelous. But friendship, which retains me in the retreat where I am, does not permit me to leave it. You think, without doubt, like Julian, that great man so calumniated, who said that friends ought always to be preferred to kings.

“In whatever corner of the world I finish my life, be sure, Monseigneur, that I shall continue to make vows for you ; that is to say, for the happiness of a whole people. My heart will be ranked among your subjects ; your glory always will be dear to me. My wish will be that you may always resemble yourself, and that the other kings may resemble you. I am, with profound respect, of your Royal Highness, the very humble
VOLTAIRE.”

The prince replied with a promptitude and at a length that might have alarmed a less busy man than Voltaire. This second letter would fill about ten of these pages. Voltaire responded by dedicating to Frederic a poem on the “Use of Science by Princes,” of which he sent him a copy. The

Prince Royal, in return, gave his beloved poet a cane, the head of which was a golden bust of Socrates, and, ere the year was out, plucked up courage to send a specimen of his French verse, addressed to Voltaire; receiving in return manuscripts of great pith and moment, one a "Dissertation on the Soul," afterwards amplified for the "Philosophical Dictionary." The correspondents grew ever fonder. Voltaire "sheds tears of joy" on receiving the long letter mentioned above. Frederic, on his part, is thrown into such an agitation by the arrival of a letter from Cirey that hours pass before he is calm enough to gather its full meaning.

"Towards the hour [he wrote in 1737] when the post usually arrives, all my servants are out on the road to bring me my packet. Impatience immediately seizes me, also; I run to the window, and then, tired of seeing nothing come, I return to my usual occupations. If I hear a noise in the antechamber, I am there! 'Ah, what is it? Give me my letters! No news?' My imagination far outstrips the courier. At last, after such proceedings have continued some hours, behold, my letters arrive! I break the seals. I look for your writing (often in vain), and, when I perceive it, my agitation hinders me from breaking the seal. I read, but so fast that I am obliged sometimes to read the letter three times over before my mind is calm enough to understand what I have read; and it happens, even, that I do not succeed until the next day."

He might well make the last statement, for one of Voltaire's letters, to which the above was a reply, fills twenty-seven large printed pages, and contained a metaphysical discourse upon the question of Liberty and Necessity. Soon there was an interchange of civilities and letters between Madame du Châtelet and the prince, which continued as long as she lived. Soon Thieriot was appointed to write for the prince an occasional letter of literary news from Paris, a duty ill performed by that idle and luxurious parasite. During 1737 the prince's letters came pretty regularly to the château once a month; in 1738 he wrote seventeen times; in 1740, the year of his accession, twenty-seven times.

Such a correspondence could not remain a secret. Thieriot was before long enabled to show to the illustrious supper-tables of Paris a copy of "a very curious letter" which the Prince

Royal of Prussia (the prince, you know, who came near having his head cut off by his ogre of a father, a few years since) had lately written to Voltaire. All Europe soon heard of it. The gazettes, even, presumed to mention it. A Holland paper stated that the golden head of the cane sent to the poet was "a portrait of the prince." "Was it, indeed?" asks Voltaire. "No," replied Frederic; "my portrait is neither good-looking enough nor rare enough for me to give you. It is of Socrates, who was to Greece less than you are to France."

Voltaire, we must own, meant to get from this correspondence all the support it could furnish against the powers that kept the key of the Bastille and could drive him from his home and country without a moment's warning. At the same time, he fulfilled, to the very best of his ability and light, the duty, the opportunity, which had fallen in his way, of influencing a mind destined to rule a country. He spared no toil to give this young man the best he had. Both were under illusion. Frederic had seen beautiful works in a gallery, and seen them with the adoring rapture of ingenuous youth; but the artist — with a smudge of clay upon his nose, with his indigestions, irritabilities, servilities, vanities, and all the catalogue of his human foibles and frailties — he had not seen. Nor did Voltaire yet know how much more a kingdom governs a king than a king governs a kingdom. Hence both were destined to some disenchantment.

Voltaire was beginning to have his corps of young disciples, — known to him and unknown, — who were, by and by, to extend his influence. Many young men in Europe, and, here and there, one or two in Virginia, Maryland, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania, felt towards him very much as Frederic of Prussia felt. Never was there such an untiring and dexterous sower of seed; and now the seed was sprouting in many parts of the field. He berated his young friends soundly when he thought they deserved it, especially the idle and neglectful. His patience with such was amazing in so impatient a man; and even when he had exhausted every means of rousing them to exertion he could not cast them off; or, if he did, was swift to welcome them again on the least sign of improvement. Note these few sentences from his letters of this period: —

[To Thieriot.] "Yes; I *will* scold you till I have cured you of your indolence. You live as if man had been created only to sup; and you exist only between ten P. M. and two A. M. When you are old and abandoned, will it be a consolation to you to say, 'Formerly I drank champagne in good company'?"

[To Cideville.] "Tell Linant to be modest, humble, and serviceable. Your applause and friendship have been a sweet poison that has turned his head. Me he hates, because I have spoken frankly to him. Deserve his hatred in your turn, or he is lost."

[To Helvetius, young author.] "It costs you nothing to think, but it costs infinitely to write. I therefore preach to you eternally that art of writing which Boileau has so well known and so well taught: that respect for the language, that connection and sequence of ideas, that air of ease with which he conducts his readers, that naturalness which is the fruit of art, and that appearance of facility which is due to toil alone. A word out of place spoils the most beautiful thought."

[To Helvetius.] "Do you wish an infallible little rule for verse? Here it is: See if your thought, as you have written it in verse, is beautiful in prose also."

[To a young poet without fortune.] "Think first to improve your circumstances. First live; then compose."

[To Thieriot.] "I envy the beasts two things, — their ignorance of evil to come, and their ignorance of what is said of them."

[To Frederic.] "Learned men there will always be at Berlin; but men of genius, men who in communicating their soul render others wise, these elder sons of Prometheus who go about distributing the celestial fire among ill-organized masses, — of these there will always be very few in any country."

[To Helvetius.] "The body of an athlete and the soul of a sage, — these are what we require to be happy."

[To Mauvertuis, invited to Prussia.] "It is a beautiful age, this, when men of letters hesitate to repair to the courts of kings; but if they do not hesitate, the age will be much more beautiful."

[To Frederic.] "Those who say that the flames of religious wars are extinguished, pay, it seems to me, too much honor to human nature. The same poison still subsists, though less developed; the plague that seems stifled reproduces from time to time germs capable of infecting the earth."

CHAPTER XXXII.

FLIGHT INTO HOLLAND.

THE pleasant excitement caused by the prince's letter had subsided, and life at Cirey was going its usual course. The marquise was still restoring parts of the old château; Voltaire was building an annex for his apparatus; and they were rivals for the possession of the workmen. "Madame has taken all my men," he complains sometimes, impatient to get his laboratory in working order. There were periods of such peaceful, happy, and honorable labor during the early years of their settlement at Cirey that it seemed as if their dream was realized, and, unlike Faust, they could say to the gliding hour, "Stay, thou art fair!"

The children were occupied with their tutor, — good children, Voltaire assures us; the boy, afterwards that Duke du Châtelet who lost his head under the reign of the guillotine, was now a little scholar learning Latin fables, enraptured to receive on his birthday a silver watch, good or bad, that had cost three louis d'or. The marquis, his father, when not with his regiment, was hunting, or visiting his foundries and iron mines, or riding to the neighboring châteaux; coming home with an excellent appetite to eat, and, as soon as he had eaten, bestowing upon an intellectual company the favor of his friendly departure. He is "the worthiest gentleman I ever knew," says his wife in her correspondence. She invariably speaks of him with respect, often with warm eulogium; and he, as we are assured, was gratified at his wife's celebrity.

Madame was almost as studious as her friend, when there were no guests to entertain; for, besides her geometry, she was now learning English and Italian. She was translating Mandeville's "Fable of the Bees;" and she, too, as well as Voltaire, was grappling with Pope's "Essay on Man." One verse she remarks, delighted her very much: "An honest

man's the noblest work of God." This she thought exceedingly fine; but there was a couplet in the same book which, she says, shocked Voltaire: —

"All reason's pleasure, all the joys of sense,
Lie in three words, — health, peace, and competence."

These lines omitted *love*. "Pope is to be pitied," says Voltaire, in an epigram suggested by the passage; "he is neither happy nor wise." Madame was all enthusiasm for England and the English. She intended to visit that home of freedom as soon as she had devised a pretext; for, as she remarks, the marquis, one of the best of men, would not understand her real reason for going, which was simply to instruct herself. "You have seen the 'Julius Cæsar' of Shakespeare," she writes to Algarotti, in England; "you are going to see 'Onfort' and 'Blenkeim;' and, what is still better, you see men worthy to associate with you." She quotes with approbation two lines of Hervey: —

"O freedom, benefactress fair,
How happy who thy blessings share!"

For a year or more she was blessed in being able to render Voltaire important aid in a work near his heart. In the autumn of 1735, Algarotti, a young Italian who employed the leisure that wealth gives in patriotic and intellectual labors, spent six weeks at Cirey, where he talked frequently with its inmates upon an amiable project he had partly executed of putting Newton's "Principia" into a series of Italian dialogues for ladies. He read some of the dialogues at Cirey, and Voltaire applauded the scheme, which was completed, with happy results to Italy and to other countries; for Algarotti's work was translated into several languages. Its best result was in suggesting to Voltaire the idea of doing for France what his young friend was doing for Italy. In his English Letters he had given Newton the place of honor, and this at a time when Newton's philosophy was unknown to the many and despised by the few. Out of England there were not in the world, probably, thirty Newtonians when Voltaire wrote upon Newton in his English Letters. He determined, in 1735, to write a volume, giving in a clear, exact, but popular form, the substance of Newton's work, which, being in Latin, and algebra, was, is, and will always

remain inaccessible except to the learned. It was a project worthy of a patriot and a scholar thus to place the best intellectual treasure of a foreign land within easy reach of the whole educated class of his own; and it was peculiarly *his* work who felt that knowledge is the antidote to superstition, and that superstition was poisoning the life of France.

From the middle of 1735 to the end of 1736, Newton was his principal task. "Thalia, Thalia," he wrote from the midst of it to Mademoiselle Quinault, who was playing in his "Prodigal Son," "if I were at Paris, I would work only for you. You would make me an amphibious animal, comie six months of the year, and tragic the other six; but there is in the world a devil of a Newton, who has found out how much the sun weighs, and of what color the rays are which compose light. This strange man has turned my head." And to his ancient professor, Abbé d'Olivet, in October, 1736: "At present I am occupied in learning how much the sun weighs; one folly the more. 'What does it matter,' you will ask, 'how much it weighs, provided we enjoy it?' Oh, it matters much to us deep thinkers, for it relates to the grand principle of gravitation. My dear friend, my dear master, Newton is the greatest man that ever lived, — the greatest, I mean, as the giants of old are compared with children who play with cherry-stones. Nevertheless, let us not be discouraged; let us gather some flowers in this world which he measured, which he weighed, which he alone knew. Let us sport under the arms of this Atlas who carries the sky; let us compose dramas, odes, rubbish. Love me; console me for being so small. Adieu, my dear friend, my dear master." In this light, familiar way he spoke of a piece of work that evidently tasked the united powers of Madame du Châtelet and himself, and which filled months with arduous, fascinating toil.

Thus they were employed at the beginning of Christmas week in 1736. The long and honorable labor was substantially done; only the last two chapters being incomplete. The weather was cold; and Voltaire, a chilly mortal, from his unceasing, inordinate industry, stirred seldom from the warmth of the fire. He loved a fire. He was a rare heaper-on of fuel, and visitors wondered at the number of cords of wood daily consumed in the vain attempt to warm the old château.

But the poet's corner was warm and snug enough, and he clung to it; for the earth was covered with snow, and the air was thick with wintry storm.

It was Saturday, December 21st, the longest night of the year. A letter arrives from the "guardian angel" of the house, D'Argental, — a letter of warning! The peace of this abode rested upon a promise which the Keeper of the Seals had given again and again to the Duchess de Richelieu, that he would begin no proceeding against Voltaire without giving her notice. Notice had been given! D'Argental forwarded it swiftly to Cirey. The pretext of the threatened prosecution seems to have astounded the inmates of the châteaueau even more than the threat itself. It was a merry poem of a hundred and twenty lines, called "The Worldling" (*Le Mondain*), suggested by the "Fable of the Bees," and written in the gay hours following the success of "Alzire," a few months before. The poem was a jovial explosion of anti-Pascalism; harmless if taken as a joke, nor likely to be taken otherwise except by a Tartuffe.

"Regret who will the good old time,
And the age of gold, and Astrea's reign,
And the beautiful days of Saturn and of Rhea,
And the garden of our first parents."

"For my part," continued the poet, "I love luxury and even softness [*mollesse*], all the pleasures, all the arts, cleanliness, taste, decoration; and so does every honest man." One of the lines of this poem has remained current coin in France ever since: "*Le superflu, chose très nécessaire.*"¹

The offense of this poem was supposed to lie in a few lines referring to the legend of Adam and Eve: "My dear Adam, my gourmand, my good father, what did you do in the garden of Eden? Did you toil for this stupid human race of ours? Did you caress Madame Eve, my mother? Confess to me that both of you had long nails, a little black and dirty, your hair slightly out of order, your complexion dark, your skin brown and tanned. Without decency, the most fortunate love is love no more; it is a shameful need. Immediately tired of one another, they sup genteelly under an oak upon water, millet, and acorns; then sleep upon the ground. Such

¹ The superfluous, a thing very necessary.

is the condition of man in a state of pure nature." To this he contrasts the daily life of a rich Frenchman of that period, to whom all the arts ministered, and who enjoyed the refined delights of mind, taste, and sense. The poem concludes with a few lines which utter the feelings of millions of school-boys, whose souls have wearied of Telemachus and never-ending preach: "Now, Monsieur Telemachus, vaunt as you may your little Ithaca, where your Cretans, dismally virtuous, poor in goods, rich in abstinence, go without everything in order to have abundance, I consent willingly to be whipped within your walls if ever I go to seek *there* my happiness."

At the instigation of Boyer, preceptor of the dauphin, a priest whose name comes down to us laden with Voltaire's contemptuous ridicule, the aged Cardinal de Fleury consented to the prosecution of the author of the "Mondain." D'Argental's warning was emphatic and urgent. "But for the respect felt for your House," he said, "M. de Voltaire would long ago have been arrested, and it is now in contemplation to write to M. du Châtelet, requesting that he no longer give him an asylum." It was this last menace that threw the lady into such extreme apprehension, since it threatened to put an end to their scheme of life. The marquis, true child of his period, had no scruples with regard to the morality of the situation, but he would have died for its decorums. Madame laughed at the idea of such extreme respect felt for their House, when the château of a Prince de Guise had not sufficed to protect her poet; but all the more was she alarmed at a danger of which she knew not the extent, nor the real cause.

At length, after agonizing conflicts of feeling, she consented to his temporary departure. He should at least cross the frontier, and await the development of events. If the storm blew over, he could return. If not, he must seek an abode in some country — England, Holland, Prussia — where a poet and philosopher could not be turned out of his home into the snow by a dull theologian ambitious to wear a red hat. It was nine in the evening when she was brought to consent to this project, and they determined to leave that very night; she to go with him as far as Vassy, four miles off, the nearest village where he could get post-horses. We have the letter which he

wrote to D'Argental at Vassy early on Sunday morning, while, perhaps, the horses were harnessing:—

“Your friend cannot endure that I should remain longer in a country where I am treated so inhumanly. We have left Cirey; at four o'clock in the morning we are at Vassy, where I am to take post-horses. But, my true, my tender and honored friend, now that the moment arrives when I must separate myself forever from one who has done all for me, — who for me left Paris, left all her friends, and all the agreeable things of life, — one whom I adore and ought to adore, you know what I feel; the situation is horrible. I should set out with joy inexpressible; I would go to see the Prince of Prussia, who often invites me; I would put between envy and me a space so wide that I should be troubled by it no more; I would live in foreign countries like a Frenchman who will always respect his own country; I should be free, and should not abuse my liberty; I should be the happiest man in the world; but your friend is before me in a flood of tears. My heart is pierced. Will it be necessary to let her return alone to a château which she has rebuilt only for me, and deprive myself of the charm of my life, because I have enemies at Paris? It is, assuredly, to unite the absurdity of the age of gold and the barbarity of the age of iron to menace me for such a work. If you deem the storm too violent, send us word to the usual address, and I shall continue my journey; if you believe it calmed, I shall come to a halt. But what a frightful life! I would rather die than be eternally tormented by the dread of losing my liberty upon the most trifling complaint, without form of law. I submit all to you; see what I ought to do.”

They separated at Vassy on Sunday morning; he taking the road to Lorraine, she returning to the void and desolate château at Cirey. She heard nothing of him until the Friday following, when good news came. He had reached the frontier in safety, and had gone on toward Brussels, a hundred and fifty miles distant, where he was to be addressed as Monsieur Renol, merchant. Best of all, his health had not suffered. “His unfortunate health,” wrote the marquise to D'Argental, “always supports journeys better than we should dare hope, because then he works less. Still, when I look out upon the earth covered with snow, and the weather so dismal and thick; when I think of the climate to which he is going, and his extreme sensitiveness to cold, I am ready to die of grief. I would endure his absence if I could be assured of his health.”

Her long and almost daily letters to their guardian angel,

D'Argental, show how her heart was torn with apprehension and anxiety during the next two months. She brooded over the situation. She imagined new explanations. She feared a collision between Voltaire and Rousseau at Brussels. She dreaded lest her poet should go to the Prince Royal of Prussia, and never return to Cirey. That prince might be amiable, but he was not king, and he had an ogre of a father, who might even arrest a French poet and send him packing home to a Keeper of the Seals. The ogre would have liked nothing better. That metaphysical treatise, too, that thirty-page letter to the prince upon Liberty and Necessity, — what insanity to trust such a dreadful package of explosive matter out of their own hands! “A Treatise,” wrote madame, “reasonable enough to bring its author to the stake; a book a thousand times more dangerous, and, assuredly, more punishable, than the ‘Pucelle.’” And the prince to have in his custody such a work as that! How likely it was to fall into the hands of the Prussian ministry, and so reach his father, and thus the French ambassador, and finally the French ministry! To confide such a work to a prince of twenty-four years, unformed, whom a fit of sickness might render religious! To make the happiness of her life depend upon the discretion and fidelity of the Prince Royal, merely to gratify a foolish vanity of showing the work to a young man who could not appreciate it. Thus she tormented herself with apprehensions of evil, shut up in the dead of winter in an old country château, which only *his* presence could for a day have made endurable. For some time she indulged the fancy that one of her own relations had taken this method of gratifying an enmity against her. So she was wretched in the belief that *she* had been the cause of his unhappiness. But she had one comfort: “Happily, I am sure of M. du Châtelet. He is the most honorable and the most estimable man I know, and I should be the basest of creatures if I did not think so.” Again, “It is a happiness unique to live with a man so worthy.”

The traveler was by no means so unhappy as she. At Brussels he did not fall foul of Rousseau, and the actors there celebrated the arrival of M. Renol, merchant, by performing the tragedy of “Alzire,” written by M. de Voltaire, poet. The same coincidence marked the arrival of M. Renol at Anvers,

the next large city of Flanders. The gazettes informed the public that M. de Voltaire was on his way to visit the Prince Royal of Prussia; and that prince, on learning the true cause of his leaving Cirey, sent a messenger to offer him the use of the Prussian ambassador's house in London. The prince overwhelmed him with sympathy and attention. Voltaire received four letters from him at the same time, besides a copy of Wolf's "Metaphysics" and a cargo of French verses. Continuing his journey, he reached Amsterdam, still as M. Renol, merchant; but there the transparent disguise was laid aside. He had a world of business at the Dutch capital, where a complete and authorized edition of his works was in course of publication, and where he intended to have an edition of his "Elements of Newton" published simultaneously with one at Paris. At Leyden, where he spent several days, he improved the opportunity to submit knotty points in Newton to the learned professors of the university, particularly to Professor s' Gravesande, a staunch Newtonian. Twenty English gentlemen of the suite of George II. called upon him at Leyden, and he received them, busy as he was. His mind seemed absorbed in Newton during most of his stay in Holland.

"I live here," he wrote to D'Argental, "quite like a philosopher. I study much; I see little company; I try to understand Newton, and I try to make him understood. I console myself by study for the absence of my friends. It is not possible at present for me to recast the 'Prodigal Son.' I could well enough labor at a tragedy in the morning and at a comedy in the evening; but to pass in the same day from Newton to Thalia, I do not feel the force for it. Wait till the spring, gentlemen; *la poésie* will serve her quarter; but just now it is the turn of science. If I do not succeed with Newton, I shall console myself very quickly with you."

The agonizing letters of Madame du Châtelet imploring his return soon prevailed; and in March, 1737, after an absence of nearly three months, he gave out on all sides that he was going to England, and slipped quietly back to Cirey. "Be sure and not forget that I am in England," he writes to Abbé Moussinot.

No act of arbitrary power of which he was himself the

victim ever stirred within him so lasting indignation as this proscription of "Le Mondain." He spoke of it twenty years after with bitterness, and it was, perhaps, the chief motive of his attempt to establish himself, at a later day, in another country. He felt it the more acutely because the abhorred Rousseau was the witness and harbinger of his discredit. To Rousseau he attributed scandalous paragraphs which appeared in the gazettes, informing Europe that the author of the English Letters had been driven (*chassé*) from France, never to return, and had gone to Leyden for the purpose of defending atheism against Professor s' Gravesande. These reports reached Paris, reached the government, and he asked the professor to "write two words to the Cardinal de Fleury," to set him right with that minister; for, said he, "all my property is in France, and I am under a necessity of destroying an imposture which in your country I should content myself with despising, as you would."

Madame du Châtelet, and she alone, brought him back to France. "A man of letters," he wrote to D'Argental, soon after his return to Cirey, "ought to live in a free country, or make up his mind to lead the life of a timorous slave, whom other slaves, jealous of him, continually accuse to the master. In France I have nothing to expect but such persecutions; they will be my only recompense. I feel that I shall always be the victim of the first calumniator. In vain I hide in obscurity; in vain I write to no one; it will be known where I am, and my obstinate concealment will perhaps render my retreat culpable. Thus, I live in continual alarm without knowing how I can parry the blows dealt me every day. There is no likelihood of my ever returning to Paris, to expose myself again to the furies of superstition and envy. I shall live at Cirey or in a free land. *I have always said to you that if my father, my brother, or my son were prime minister of a despotic state, I would leave it to-morrow!* Judge what must be my repugnance on finding myself in such a state to-day! But, after all, Madame du Châtelet is to me more than a father, a brother, or a son."

He wrote, nevertheless, a conciliatory letter to one of the ministers, M. de Maurepas; to whom, also, madame sent a propitiatory present of two bucks, much fearing that they

would reach him the worse for their journey, — *pourris*, as she plainly expressed it.

Was he going to be a good boy, then, and write no more *Mondains* and essays upon Liberty and Necessity? That was Madame du Châtelet's desire. She implored him to be "prudent" (*sage*); she strove, as she said, to "save him from himself;" she begged him to leave out of his new edition the passages that were most "burnable." That, however, was not Voltaire's interpretation of the case. As soon as he was well settled at Cirey again, in the spring of 1737, he amused himself by writing a "Defense of the *Mondain*," a poem a little longer than the "*Mondain*" itself, and, if possible, more audacious, more comic, more gracefully effective and murderous. "At table yesterday, by a sad chance, I found myself seated by a master hypocrite." The poem consists of the conversation between the poet and the priest; and this device gave him an opportunity, which he made the most of, to show that, whatever abstinence priests might preach, they did not deny themselves mundane luxuries. His description of this luxurious churchman guzzling perfumed and amber-colored canary, after consigning the author of "the *Mondain*" to perdition, is extremely diverting. Nor does he omit to adduce the example of Solomon, held up as the wisest of men; who, however, carried luxurious indulgence to a point which the *Mondain* would not presume to attempt. "A thousand beauties? That is much for a sage! Give me one. One is enough for me, who have not the honor to be either sage or king."

He wrote yet another poem, entitled "The Use of Life: A Reply to Criticism upon the *Mondain*," in which he inculcated moderation and temperance. "The secret of happiness is to moderate your desires." "To enjoy the pleasures, you must know how to leave them." Prosperity, adversity, — these are but names; "our happiness is in ourselves alone."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

VOLTAIRE AND SCIENCE.

FOR about four years—1735 to 1739—science was the chief pursuit of the inmates of the château of Cirey. The new impulse toward science, originating in the Royal Society, and stimulated by Sir Isaac Newton's sublime career, reached France soon after Voltaire's return from England, and kept on its way round the world. It set printer Franklin and his leather-aproned junto rubbing electrical tubes in Philadelphia. It made farmer Bartram of Pennsylvania a botanist, and Jefferson in Virginia a natural philosopher. It captivated Voltaire in 1735, and held him long enthralled. Among his friends and instructors at Leyden, the Leyden jar was soon to be invented. As in all progressive times, so in that wonderful century of seed-sowing, the boundaries of human knowledge were greatly enlarged; and it was inevitable that so sympathetic a spirit as Voltaire should endeavor to lend a helping hand.

He believed, too, in a varied culture. He was prone to undervalue the man of one talent; the nature with only one cultivated field; the poet, like J. B. Rousseau, who could do nothing but poetry; the man of business who was only a business man; the philosopher who always and only philosophized. He said, more than once, that he should have venerated Newton the more if Newton had written some *vaudevilles* for the London stage. Friends remonstrated with him upon his absorption in pursuits that seemed to them foreign to his nature. He had been a punctual and profuse correspondent until science possessed him: then he often forgot or delayed to answer his letters. "What shall you gain," asked Cideville, "by knowing the pathway of light and the gravitation of Saturn?"

"We must give our souls," he replied, "all the forms possi-

ble to them. It is a fire which God has confided to us; we ought to nourish it with whatever we find that is most precious. We must have all imaginable modes of intellectual life, open all the doors of our souls to all the sciences and all the sentiments; and, provided that they do not enter pell-mell, there is room within us for every one of them."

And so for four or five years he was a natural philosopher. He filled his gallery with costly apparatus, — air-pumps, thermometers, furnaces, crucibles, retorts, telescopes, microscopes, prisms, scales, and compasses. Failing to get a competent chemist who could say mass on Sundays in the chapel of the château, he endeavored to form and train a young man for the work of the laboratory alone, which answered better. For a year or two he had a chemical assistant at Cirey; and, indeed, many of his experiments must have required the aid of several men, — weighing a ton of red-hot iron, for example. We perceive that Prince Frederic caught the new taste, and followed his example. The prince sowed radish-seed in an exhausted receiver to see if seed would germinate without air. He worked his air-pump diligently. It was "the mode" with the intelligent portion of the public not to be content with their ignorance of natural laws.

The chief results of Voltaire's studies and experiments in science occupy two volumes of his works, and strengthen every other volume produced in the latter half of his life. One of these volumes is devoted to his "Elements of Newton's Philosophy," — a work of great celebrity in its day, obsolete now only because Newton's philosophy is part and parcel of human thought in every civilized land.

It is interesting to notice throughout the wide range of Voltaire's works how Newton had fascinated him. In London, both Franklin and Voltaire, almost at the same time, appear to us as if haunting Newton's neighborhood; longing for a sight of the aged discoverer, and longing in vain; happy to converse with those who had known him. When he was in England, Voltaire tells us, he was denied the consolation of seeing the great philosopher, who was then sinking to the tomb; but he frequently met Dr. Samuel Clarke, Newton's friend and disciple, who continued the controversy with Leibnitz after the master's death. From conversations with Dr. Clarke he de-

rived that impulse towards metaphysics which influenced him for some years. But, he tells us, he soon perceived the insufficiency of the metaphysical systems then in vogue. "One day, full of those grand subjects which charm the mind by their immensity, I said to a very enlightened member of the company, 'Mr. Clarke is a much greater metaphysician than Mr. Newton.' 'That may be,' was the cool reply. 'It is as if you should say that one of them plays with balloons better than the other.' This reply made me reënter into myself. Since that time I have dared to pierce some of those balloons of metaphysics, and have found that nothing came out of them except wind. So, when I said to M. s' Gravesande, 'Vanity of vanities, and metaphysics are vanity,' he replied, 'I am very sorry that you are right.'"

Another English anecdote of Dr. Clarke he called to mind on beginning to write his "Elements of Newton," and he introduced it very happily, as if to disarm the prejudices of those who regarded the philosophy of Descartes as part of their orthodoxy. These are the opening sentences of his work upon the "Principia : " —

"Newton was intimately persuaded of the existence of a God, and he understood by that word not only an infinite being, all-powerful, eternal and the Creator, but a Master who has established a relation between himself and his creatures ; for, without that relation, the knowledge of a God is only a sterile idea, which, by the hope of impunity, would seem to invite to crime every reasoner of perverse disposition. Thus that great philosopher makes a singular remark at the end of his 'Principia.' It is that we do not say, My Eternal, my Infinite, because those attributes have no relation to our nature ; but we say, and ought to say, My God, by which we must understand the Master and the Preserver of our lives and the object of our thoughts. I remember that, in several conversations which I had in 1726 with Dr. Clarke, that philosopher never pronounced the name of God except with an air of seriousness and respect very noticeable. I mentioned to him the impression which that made upon me. He told me it was from Newton that he had insensibly taken the habit, — which, indeed, ought to be that of all men. The whole philosophy of Newton conducts necessarily to the knowledge of the Supreme Being, who has created everything, and arranged everything according to his will."

With this prelude, so just to Newton, he enters upon the

first part of his task, which is to give an account of the controversy between Newton and Leibnitz upon the metaphysics of his theme. Newton's opinion was that God, infinitely free, as infinitely powerful, had done all things without any other reason than his own will; the planets, for example, moving from west to east, rather than from east to west, simply and solely because such was God's will. Leibnitz, on the contrary, held that God's will was determined by reasons adequate to control it. Then, said Newton, God is not free. Then, replied Leibnitz, God is capricious. Newton and Leibnitz were also at variance upon the nature of the connection between the soul and the body, and upon many other questions not then ripe even for serious consideration. "If any one," says Voltaire, "wishes to know what Newton thought upon the soul, and upon the manner in which it operates, I shall reply that he followed none of the current opinions of his time. Do you ask what that man *knew* upon this subject, who had submitted the infinite to calculation, and had discovered the laws of gravity? *He knew how to doubt.*"

The second part of Voltaire's work contains the exposition of Newton's researches in optics. Here he was by no means either a translator or a compiler. He tried all the experiments described by Newton. He had in his gallery at Cirey a dark chamber, arranged according to Newton's description, in which he performed the experiments with prisms of various sizes and kinds which are now so familiar. Every intelligent visitor to the château was sure to be taken to this dark room to see him break a ray of light into Sir Isaac's brilliant rainbow. He invented some experiments of his own, and brought the air-pump into requisition to see the effect of a vacuum upon the prismatic colors. He was exceedingly pleased with his prisms and his dark chamber; he reflected much upon the Newtonian theory of light, but, like most other philosophers, he left the subject where Newton left it in his last edition of 1726.

The difficult part of Voltaire's task was in explaining the principle of gravitation. Sir Isaac himself gives a list of the works necessary to be understood by a student before attempting his "*Principia*," — a somewhat formidable catalogue. Most mathematicians, however, recommend a much more ex-

tensive preparation. Whatever was necessary for the clear understanding of this part of Newton's work, Voltaire acquired. He wrestled mightily with his task; for at college he had had no mathematical training. With the assistance of Maupertuis, of Madame du Châtelet, of the learned professors of Leyden University, and his own unconquerable resolution, he mastered the work, and gave an account of it which any educated person of good intelligence can follow and enjoy. His essay is free from those sallies of wit and satire, those side-blows at the various objects of his antipathy, which mark almost every other production of his pen. Descartes, whose philosophy Newton's displaced, and Leibnitz, Newton's chief opponent, he treats with the respect due to their great qualities, while dissenting with perfect candor from their positions.

Before dispatching the last chapters to his printers in Amsterdam, he sent a copy of the whole work to the Chancellor of France, asking for a royal privilege to publish it. He expected to receive the privilege. "The most imbecile fanatic, the most envenomed hypocrite," he wrote to a friend, "can find nothing in it to object to." Six months passed away, and he had received no answer to his application. By way of showing, as he says, "a docility without reserve," he suspended the publication in Holland; and, to make the suspension sure, he withheld the manuscript of the last two chapters. Other months passed, and no news from the censorship. The Dutch printers, impatient, engaged a local mathematician to complete the work; which they published, swarming with errors, with a belittling title-page of their own concocting, and the last pages added by another hand. Finally, to complete the series of misfortunes, the Chancellor of France, M. d'Aguesseau, refused the privilege of publication, and left the author to struggle as he might with this complication of embarrassments.

The most bigoted reader would look through the work in vain to find either cause or pretext for the ministerial ban. The reason was the freedom with which he had handled the theories of Descartes, who supposed that the earth and the moon were whirled along from west to east by a vast number of minute particles rushing eternally in the same direction. Descartes ruled in science and in literature. Polite society

was Cartesian. As M. Saigey remarks, "it savored of good breeding" to profess a belief in the Cartesian whirlwinds. *Grandes dames*, and the young ladies who composed their courts, had upon their toilet-tables Fontenelle's "Conversations upon the Plurality of Worlds," in which the astronomy of Descartes was adorned with all the graces of his style. Descartes was defended against Newton in the most elegant circles. The Duchess du Maine and her court were Cartesian, and nearly all institutions of learning in France, which took notice of astronomy at all, illustrated the wisdom and the power of the Creator by describing the Cartesian whirlwinds with whatever eloquence they possessed.

This was precisely the condition of things which a competent author would desire, if he were sure he had the truth on his side. Voltaire's work, impatiently expected, and long delayed by the perversity of things and men, struggled into life at last, and made a genuine sensation. The errors of the first Holland edition published without his knowledge, the novelty of a poet appearing in the character of a man of science, the author's prompt, vehement explanations and remonstrances, the publication at length of a correct and authorized version, the opposition of the polite world, the flaming zeal of the few Newtonians, all contributed to enhance the celebrity and influence of the book. The "Dutch corsairs," as he styled the impatient printers of Amsterdam, had taken the liberty to entitle the work "The Elements of the Philosophy of Newton Adapted to Every Capacity" (*mis à la portée de tout le monde*). The malign Desfontaines remarked, in his notice, that there was one error of the Dutch edition which the author had not corrected. For *portée*, said he, read *porte*; since it was only at everybody's *door* that the new work was put. The work made its way through a vast number of doors, and in ten years there were scarcely ten Cartesians in France.

Before Newton was off his hands, he was immersed in original researches. The Academy of Sciences proposed as the subject for the prize essay of 1738 "The Nature of Fire and its Propagation." Voltaire, who was living in a land of fire, near forges and foundries vomiting flame by night and day, resolved to compete for the prize, and entered upon a course of laborious experiment. We have seen him, on previous

pages, setting the Abbé Moussinot at work among the chemists of Paris. At Chaumont he frequently visited a foundry, where he had scales prepared for weighing huge masses of iron, cold and hot, as well as great pots for weighing melted iron. He weighed from two pounds to two thousand pounds, first cold, and then hot. He worked thoroughly and deliberately, beginning by having iron chains put to the scales instead of ropes, and taking the precaution to be surrounded by "ten ocular witnesses," of whom one, doubtless, was Madame du Châtelet. What an unwonted scene in a Chaumont foundry! He had three cast-iron pots, very thick, hung upon scales near the furnace, into one of which he caused a hundred pounds of liquid iron to be poured; into another, thirty-five pounds; into the third, twenty-five. After six hours' cooling, he found that his hundred-pound mass weighed one hundred and four pounds, and that the others had increased in proportion. This experiment he repeated many times, always with the same results. Then he tried it with pots of gray ore, "less metallic" than the cast-iron, and there was neither increase nor diminution of weight in the contents of the pots. Yet he was long in doubt whether heat possessed the property of weight, because the results of his experiments were not uniform, and he could not always determine whether the occasional increase of weight was due to heat or to the absorption of matter from the atmosphere or the vessel.

He performed a series of experiments with hot and cold liquids, heating various liquids separately, mixing them hot, mixing them cold, pouring a pint of boiling liquid upon a pint of cold, and blending them in all conceivable ways; which led him to the discovery that the temperature resulting from mixing two liquids of different temperatures is not always the mean temperature. "I have prepared," he says in his essay, "some experiments upon the heat which liquids communicate to liquids and solids to solids, and I will give a table of the same, if the gentlemen of the Academy are of opinion that it could be of any utility."

He experimented laboriously upon the second part of his subject, the Propagation of Fire. He tried one experiment which would not have been safe in the drier atmosphere of America, where a spark from a cigar on a still day can set a

mountain or a plain on fire. He had a piece of forest, eighty feet by twenty, partly cleared, but strewn with fallen trees and cut wood; to one end of which he applied fire by means of straw. The day being serene and dry, the fire advanced twenty feet in an hour, and then went out. But the next day there was a high wind, and the whole eighty feet was burnt over in an hour.

The science of one century is the ignorance of the next. It was impossible that an essay upon Fire, written in 1737, should have final scientific value, except to mark how far the subject had then been developed; as Pliny, in his "Natural History," gives us an imperishable and priceless cyclopædia of human ignorance in the first century. Voltaire's essay is all acuteness and tact; but it is not free from a little half-conscious attitudinizing. The doctors recommended him, about this time, to take more exercise in the open air; hunting, for example. Why not hunt, in a hunting country? Whereupon he requests the Abbé Moussinot to send him from Paris the complete apparatus and costume of a hunter. He wore it once or twice, but he soon discovered that killing animals and birds for pleasure was not very congenial. He adhered longer to science than to shooting; but we catch glimpses of the trappings of the investigator; we observe a polite company gathered round the iron pots of liquid iron, with a poet in the midst of them amiably demonstrating that it is possible for a poet to know something besides verse-making.

His essay was nearly done, and he was preparing to send it to the Academy, the authorship being duly concealed according to the rule. Madame du Châtelet, who had dissented from some of his conclusions, suddenly resolved to send in a competing essay. "I wished [as she explained to Maupertuis] to try my powers under the shelter of the *incognito*; for I expected never to be known. M. du Châtelet was the only one in my confidence, and he kept the secret so well that he said nothing of it even to you at Paris. I could perform no experiment, because my project was unknown to M. de Voltaire, and I could not have concealed experiments from him. I made up my mind to compete only a month before the expiration of the time set by the Academy for sending in the essays. I could only work in the night, and I was all new in these sub-

jects. M. de Voltaire's work, which was almost finished when I began mine, suggested some ideas, as well as the desire to compete. I set to work without knowing whether I should ever see my essay again, and I said nothing about it to M. de Voltaire, because I did not wish to blush before him for an undertaking which I feared might displease him. Besides, I combated almost all his ideas."

For eight successive nights she toiled at her essay, only sleeping "an hour" each night; and when nearly overcome by sleep she would plunge her hands into ice-water, walk rapidly up and down the room, and throw her arms about. Thirty essays were received from the different countries of Europe, of which five were pronounced worthy to compete. Two of these select five were written at Cirey; but the prize was divided among the other three contestants: Professor Euler, of St. Petersburg, Father Lozeraude de Fiesc, of the Jesuits, and the Count de Créqui-Canaples, a French nobleman. The essay of the eminent mathematician, Euler, contained some valuable and even memorable points; it was the work of a man of science. Those of his two associates in glory owed their laurels, as French historians of science tell us, solely to the fact that they adhered to the philosophy of Descartes, which, in 1738, was clinging to life with the tenacity of death. "It savored of good breeding to be Cartesian," — the last resource of error, that has received its death-wound. Condorcet says boldly that Voltaire's essay deserved the prize, an opinion from which M. Emile Saigey does not dissent.¹ "Voltaire's essay [says M. Saigey] is in advance of the science of that age, and we find in it many passages the value of which could not then have been appreciated."

When the news of the awards reached Cirey, the lady of the château told her secret. "I felt [she says] that a rejection shared by him was an honor to me." He took the little comedy in good part; read her essay, extolled it warmly, procured its honorable publication by the Academy, and wrote an anonymous review of it for the press, which carried the name of the authoress to the ends of Europe. She was gratified by the celebrity he gave her. He dedicated to her almost everything he published at this period, and we perceive from her

¹ *La Physique de Voltaire*, page 53.

letters that she did not enjoy the omission of his complimentary epistles in some of the foreign editions of his works. In the records of the Academy both essays were printed, preceded by a notice: "The authors of the two following pieces having made known their desire that they should be printed, we consent thereto with pleasure, although we cannot approve the idea advanced in either of them of the nature of fire. Both essays give evidence of great reading, great knowledge of the best works upon science, and they are filled with facts and views. Besides, the name alone of the authors can interest the public curiosity. No. 6 is by a lady of high rank, Madame du Châtelet, and the piece No. 7 is by one of our best poets."

At the head of his essay Voltaire placed two Latin verses, which have since done good service in similar ways: —

"Ignis ubique latet, naturam amplectitur omnem,
Cuncta parit, renovat, dividit, unit, alit."¹

D'Alembert asked him who was the author of these lines. "My dear philosopher [he replied], those two verses are mine. I am like the Bishop of Noyon, who used to say in his sermons, 'My brethren, I took none of these truths which I have just uttered either from the Scripture or from the Fathers; all came out of the head of your bishop.'"

Continuing their scientific labors, madame published, in 1740, a work entitled "Institutions Physiques," in which she championed Leibnitz, as Voltaire had championed Newton. He wrote an extensive review of it, in which he mingled gallantry and criticism with his usual art, — not unwilling to let his readers see under what a miserable bondage religion itself struggled, when such giants as Leibnitz and Newton could gravely accept the theologian's chronology, and their pupils angrily discuss such frivolous questions as why God did not create the world six thousand years sooner than he did, and whether he *could* have done so if he had wished it.

In 1741, he sent to the Academy of Sciences an essay upon the "Computation and Nature of Moving Forces," which shows that, by dint of several years' study of science, mathematically treated, he had become a respectable mathematician. He em-

¹ Fire is hidden everywhere: fills all nature; produces, renews, divides, unites, nourishes, all things.

loys the language of mathematics in this essay with a readiness and ease which prove familiar knowledge. He appears to have had some intention of seeking admission to the Academy of Sciences, as "a bulwark" against the hostility of those who were interested in keeping the human mind in bondage to tradition.

A few years later he wrote scientific essays on subjects more within the range of unlearned readers. The Academy of Bologna having elected him a member of their body, he acknowledged the compliment by composing an essay for them in the Italian language, upon the Changes which have occurred in our Globe. This essay shows us in an interesting manner what man did *not* know in geology about the middle of the last century. The spirit that pervades it, and which it inculcates, is the spirit to which we owe our better knowledge, — the spirit of doubt. It is in this essay that his zeal to relieve infant science from the incubus of sacred legend laid him open to retort. It is said that, even at the present day, there are provincials who believe in a literal deluge of the whole earth; but in 1746 all theologians assumed it; and that one legend, universally accepted as sacred history, would have sufficed to choke science in its cradle. In his zeal, I say, to deliver the human mind from the ignominious bondage of the deluge legend, he made light of the discovery of shells and fossils which had been found upon mountains. Geology had not then explained their presence a mile above the sea, and theologians marked them for their own.

"A stone," said he, "was discovered in the mountains of Hesse which appeared to bear the impression of a turbot, and upon the Alps a petrified pike; from which the inference has been drawn that the sea and the rivers have flowed by turns over the mountains. It were more natural to suppose that these fish, carried by a traveler and becoming spoiled, were thrown away, and, in the course of time, were petrified. But that idea was too simple and too little systematic. An anchor, they say, was found upon a mountain of Switzerland; people do not reflect that heavy burdens, particularly cannon, have often been transported in men's arms, and that an anchor may have served to hang those burdens to a cleft in the rocks. It is very probable that this anchor was taken from

one of the little ports of Lake Geneva. Finally, the story of the anchor may be fabulous; and men like better to declare that it was the anchor of a vessel which was moored in Switzerland before the deluge."

He discourses amusingly upon the question how a universal flood was brought about which covered the highest mountains, and required a quantity of water equal to twenty-four oceans. "Science," he says, "has nothing in common with miracles. Religion commands us to believe them, and reason forbids us to explain them." Dr. Burnet, he adds, conjectured that the ocean was swollen to that prodigious height by boiling; but no, that could not be; for water in boiling does not increase more than a quarter in bulk. "To what a point we are reduced when we attempt to fathom what we ought only to respect!" Twenty years later, when a great number of marine deposits had been found far above the level of the sea, he still demands proof that they *were* marine deposits. Might they not be snail shells? he asks. To such a point is an author reduced who discusses a geological question before geology exists!

During the rest of his life, though he gradually discontinued his more laborious investigations in science, he was an attentive student of nature. His essay of 1768, on "Some Singularities of Nature," shows that the habit of his mind was to observe and reflect upon the natural facts within his view. If he had lived in our day, he would have subscribed to the scientific periodicals, and kept them well supplied with the short articles their conductors love to receive, such as relate something new about bees, coral, snails, toads, or oysters, or give new conjectures concerning the formation of mountains, seas, lakes, stone, and shells. His interest in nature was genuine and lasting. When there were no visitors at the château, natural science appears to have furnished Madame du Châtelet and himself with their most familiar topics of conversation, and, particularly, the influence of natural causes upon the character and history of nations. He had much of what we may call the spirit of "Buckle's History of Civilization" in him. We catch them star-gazing, also, in the memoirs of their visitors and secretaries, who were frequently invited to survey the heavens through the telescope. If any strange creature

was exhibited in Paris during their visits to the city, they were of the people who were likely to examine it. He went to see an albino once, of whom he has left us a minute and careful description. He calls it a "white Moor," and speaks of it as belonging to "a *race* inhabiting the middle of Africa, near the kingdom of Loango." After descanting, as usual, upon the blind credulity and obstinate incredulity of men, he proceeds to give a great number of particulars of the habits and character of this non-existent race. He was credulous himself on this occasion, because it lay near his heart to remove from progressive science the stumbling-block of the Adam-and-Eve legend, and he was eager to seize every chance of showing that our race could not have sprung from a single pair.

On another occasion his incredulity proved useful. A German chemist of Alsace believed he had found the secret of making saltpetre at one twentieth the ordinary price of the article, and produced some gunpowder made of his saltpetre, which proved to be excellent. He offered to sell the secret for seventeen hundred thousand francs, and one fourth of the profits of the manufacture for twenty years. The contract was signed. The head of the powder company and a chemist of repute came to Alsace, and the experiment was performed before them with some appearance of success. The gentlemen from Paris visited Voltaire, and explained their errand. He said to the chief of the powder company, "If you do not pay the seventeen hundred thousand francs until after you have made saltpetre, you will keep your money always." The chemist declared that saltpetre had been actually made. "I do not believe it," said Voltaire. "Why not?" "Men" [was his reply] "make nothing. They unite and disunite; but it belongs only to nature to make." The German tried for three months to produce saltpetre, without success. He had found in the ruins of some ancient stables and cellars a small quantity of saltpetre, which had misled him into the belief that he could get any required quantity from the earth of that region.¹

¹ Des Singularités de la Nature, par Voltaire. Chapter xxii.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

VISITORS AT CIREY.

NO other man in Europe was so attentive to what passed at Cirey as the Prince Royal of Prussia, whose passion for Voltaire did not diminish. In the spring of 1737 he announced his purpose of sending as "ambassador" to Cirey his merry and voluble young companion, Kaiserling, who would, as he hoped, bring back to him a treasure of unpublished writings, perhaps even some cantos of "La Pucelle." "In taking leave of my little friend," wrote the prince, July 6, 1737, "I said to him, 'Think that you are going to the terrestrial paradise, — to a place a thousand times more delicious than the island of Calypso; that the goddess of those haunts yields in no degree to the beauty of the enchantress of Telemachus; that you will find in her all the charms of the mind, so preferable to those of the person; that this marvel occupies her leisure in the search after truth. There it is that you will see the human spirit in its last degree of perfection, — wisdom without austerity, enlivened by love and laughter. There you will see on the one hand the sublime Voltaire, and on the other the amiable author of "Le Mondain;" him who now soars above Newton, and now without abasement sings of Phyllis. How, my dear Césarion, shall we be able to tear you away from a retreat so full of charms? Against such attractions how weak will be the bonds of an old friendship!'"

He arrived at the château, bearing a portrait of the prince for Voltaire, an elegant writing-desk of amber for madame, an installment of M. Wolf's "Metaphysics" for both, a glowing letter of twenty pages, a packet of verses, and some German books. He had the warmest welcome, and such entertainment as no palace in Europe could then have afforded, — tragedies, comedies, burlesques, puppets, the magic-lantern, music, *fêtes*, the society of a woman skilled in the agree-

able arts, and the conversation of the most amusing man alive. "Madame," as Voltaire wrote to Thieriot, "received him so well, gave him such agreeable *fêtes*, with such an easy grace, with so little of the fuss and fatigue of a *fête*, forced him to accept extremely pretty presents in a manner so noble and so adroit, that he returned enchanted with everything he had seen, heard, and received." He did, indeed. He told his prince that when Madame du Châtelet talked he loved her mind, and when she was silent he was enamored of her person. Césarion, too, made an agreeable impression, a fluent, vivacious young man, who "spoke all languages, and sometimes spoke them all at once."

Prussians then looked to Frederic with longing and enthusiasm, weary of the arbitrary drunkard, his father; and Césarion was of course full of the prince's praises, not unmindful of his hope one day to "possess" Voltaire. "Our prince [said he] at present is not rich, and he is unwilling to borrow, because, as he says, he is mortal, and he is not sure that his father would pay his debts." But nothing was more certain than that he would recompense with striking liberality any one who should be in his service without being his subject. Upon hearing this, Voltaire extolled his friend Thieriot in terms which, it is to be feared, were not justified by events.

Kaiserling took home with him a huge and rare bundle of manuscript, — parts of "Louis XIV.," many short poems, some tracts and treatises upon philosophy, besides new editions of former works; but not a canto, not a line, of "La Pucelle"! Madame la Marquise put down her foot; she would not risk her poet again, so soon after the mishap of "Le Mondain," for the best prince in Christendom! She had the poem in custody, locked in her desk, and she would not surrender it. "The friendship with which she honors me [wrote Voltaire to Frederic] does not permit me to hazard a thing which might separate me from her forever. She has renounced all to live with me in the bosom of retreat and study. . . . She knows that M. de Kaiserling was watched at Strasbourg, that he will be again on his return, that spies are after him, that he may be searched; and, above all, she knows that you would not willingly risk the happiness of

your true subjects at Cirey for a pleasantry in verse." After an intoxicating visit of something less than a month, the Baron de Kaiserling returned to Remusburg to inflame anew his prince's admiration for the inhabitants of the enchanted castle.

It was not every visitor who saw the interior of that abode in so rosy a light.

M. Mignot, husband of Voltaire's sister, died in 1737, leaving two marriageable daughters with insufficient portions. Voltaire played the part of a good French uncle on this occasion, and set Thieriot at work arranging for their honorable marriage, undertaking to provide for the elder both husband and *dot*. The husband whom Voltaire proposed for her was a son of Madame Champbonin, a jovial dame who lived near Cirey, and much enlivened the society of the neighborhood, — a great favorite everywhere, and extremely beloved by him. "God forbid [he wrote to Thieriot] that I should in the least constrain her inclinations. To aim at the liberty of a fellow creature appears to me a crime against humanity; it is the sin against nature." The young lady, a true child of Paris, pupil of the composer Rameau, accustomed to the gayeties of the metropolis, was not disposed to "bury herself" in a country château. He was disappointed, but yielded with the better grace because he had taken the precaution to sound his niece before taking any other step. "After all [he wrote to Thieriot], I have really no family but them, and I should be very glad to attach them to me. It is necessary to bear in mind that we become old, infirm, and that then it is sweet to find relatives attached to us by gratitude. If they marry *bourgeois* of Paris, I am their very humble servant, but they are lost to me. It is a sorry thing to be an old maid. The princesses of the blood find it very troublesome to endure a condition contrary to nature. We are born to have children. It is only certain fools of philosophers, like ourselves, who can decently avoid the general rule."

The result of much negotiation was that Mademoiselle Mignot, aged twenty-seven, married, February 25, 1738, the man of her choice, M. Denis, formerly a captain in a French regiment, then holding an office in the commissariat. Uncle Voltaire gave the pair his blessing, an invitation to pass the

honeymoon at Cirey, and thirty thousand francs, all of which they accepted. The younger lady, four months after, married Nicholas-Joseph de Dompierre, seigneur of Fontaine-Hornoy, chief of the finance bureau at Amiens. They were called simply M. and Madame de Fontaine, and the uncle of the bride gave her twenty-five thousand francs.

These young ladies had another uncle, Voltaire's "Jansenist of a brother," now styled by his friends the Abbé Arouet. He, too, behaved liberally to them. Besides attending both weddings, he gave the elder niece so handsome a present (amount unknown) that Madame du Châtelet wished that all *her* uncles and aunts had given her as much on her wedding-day. Armand Arouet was still an assiduous convulsionist, unmarried, wholly estranged from the author of the "Mondain," who suspected his austere brother of a secret marriage, and mentions that he chose his mistresses from among the prettiest convulsionists. Voltaire could not be tempted to attend either of the weddings, where, as he said, there would be "crowds of relations, quibbling puns, flat jests, broad stories to make the bride blush and the prudes purse their lips, a great noise, all talking together, giggling without merriment, heavy kisses heavily given, and little girls looking at everything out of the corner of their eyes." No such wedding could draw *him* from an enchanted castle in the country to the street of the Two Balls at Paris.

But Madame Denis and her husband visited a rich and liberal uncle at Cirey, in March, 1738. The bride saw in the château an enchanted castle indeed, but enchanted only as the oak-tree was enchanted that held Ariel in its gnarled and knotted embrace. The future mistress of Ferney was aghast at her uncle's bondage.

"I am in despair [she wrote to match-maker Thieriot]. I believe him lost to all his friends. He is bound in such a way that it appears to me impossible that he can break his chains. They are in a solitude that is frightful for humanity. Cirey is four leagues from a habitation, in a region of mountains and wastes; and they are abandoned by all their friends, having almost no one from Paris. Such is the life led by the greatest genius of our age; with a woman, it is true, of much intellect, very pretty, who employs all the art imaginable to beguile him. There is no kind of personal decoration which

she does not arrange, nor passages of the best philosophers which she does not cite, to please him. To that end nothing is spared. He appears more enchanted with her than ever. He is building a handsome addition to the château, in which there will be a dark room for experiments in natural philosophy. The theatre is very pretty, but they do not use it for want of actors. All the actors of the country for ten miles round are under orders to come to the château. They did all that was possible to have them there during our stay; but they could only exhibit to us some puppets, which were very good. We were received in perfect style. My uncle tenderly loves M. Denis; which does not astonish me, for he is very amiable."¹

Madame Denis was not so far wrong. There was a flaw in the bond between these two gifted and brilliant persons which of necessity vitiated their union, making each a kind of slave to the other. She was always in dread of his breaking away; and he was prevented from doing so by compassion and the instinct of fidelity. He should have lived in his own château, and the family inhabiting that château should have been his family, not another man's.

Another visitor of the year 1738 makes this plainer. Madame de Grafigny was a lady whom Voltaire and Madame du Châtelet had met at the little court of King Stanislas in Lorraine, where she was an object of sympathy on account of the violence and brutality of her husband, chamberlain to the Duke of Lorraine. After years of misery she was divorced from the chamberlain, who ended his days in prison. The inmates of Cirey offered her an asylum for a time, and in December, 1738, she came. She was then forty-three years of age, unknown to fame; for it was not till she was fifty-two that the publication of her romance, "Lettres d'une Péruvienne," gave her celebrity. Her portrait shows us a handsome, full-formed woman, "fair, fat, and forty," and her writings are, as Sainte-Beuve styles them, *cailletage* (gossip). During her residence at Cirey she wrote quires of *cailletage* to a gentleman at Lunéville, where the fallen majesty of Poland spent his French allowance. A volume of these letters was published in 1820, in which we can see the routine of life at the château almost as plainly as if we had been *femme de chambre* to the writer; since, in accordance with the custom

¹ Voltaire, Pièces Inédites. Paris, 1820, page 289.

of that age and land, she wrote as freely to a man as she could have gossiped with a woman.¹

Like Kaiserling, she was under the spell long before she reached the enchanted abode. Besides the singular favor in which the poet was held at the Polish court, the most extravagant accounts had been brought thither of the splendors of the château, the mysterious life led in it, the wizard apparatus, the dark chamber, the magician-like habits of the poet, and the unearthly fascinations of the lady of the castle. A burlesque in this taste had been published in Paris, and the château was a theme at the burlesque theatres. Kaiserling came enchanted, stayed three weeks, and went away enchanted. Madame de Grafigny came enchanted, stayed three months, and left disenchanted.

She relates her arrival at Cirey to her correspondent, who was also under the spell: —

“Upon seeing the address of this letter, you leap with joy, and you say: *Ah! Mon Dieu, she is at Cirey!* I started before daylight; I was present at the toilet of the sun. I had admirable weather and roads as far as Joinville, just as in summer, even to the dust, which one could do very well without. I reached Joinville in a little chaise of Madame Royale [Duchess de Lorraine] but there the coachman told me that it was impossible they could go further. What was I to do? I took a post-chaise. I arrived at Cirey two hours after dark, dying of fright from the state of the roads, which the devil had made horrible, expecting every moment to be overturned; paddling in the mud sometimes, for the postilions told me that if I did not alight I should be overturned. Judge of my condition! However, I arrived. The *nymph* received me very well. I remained a moment in her chamber, then went up to my own to rest. A moment after arrived, who? Your idol, holding a little candlestick in his hand, like a monk. He caressed me a thousand times; he appeared so glad to see me that his demonstrations went even to transport; he kissed my hands ten times, and questioned me about myself with a very touching air of interest. At last he went away in order to give me an opportunity to write to you. . . .

“I left my letter to dress, for fear the supper-bell should ring. I hear nothing of it, and so I am going to add a word or two. You are astonished, perhaps, that I say, simply, the *nymph* received me very

¹ Vie Privée de Voltaire et Madame du Châtelet pendant un Séjour de six Mois à Cirey. Paris, 1820.

well ; it is all I have to tell you. No ; I forgot that she spoke to me at once of her lawsuit, without any ceremony. Her clack [*caquet*] is wonderful ; she speaks extremely fast, and just as I do when I play the Frenchwoman. She talks like an angel ; so much I perceived. She had on a robe of chintz and a large apron of black taffeta ; her black hair is very long, and it is gathered up behind to the top of her head, and curled like that of little children, which is very becoming to her. As I have seen nothing yet except her dress, I can speak to you of nothing but her dress. With regard to your *idol*, I know not if he powdered himself for my sake, but all I can tell you is that he was dressed as he would have been at Paris. The *goodman* [M. du Châtelet] leaves to-morrow for Brussels, when we three shall be alone ; and no one will shed any tears on account of it : that is a secret which we have already imparted to one another."

The summons to supper here interrupted the epistle. To understand the account she gives of the conversation at the table, the reader needs to be informed that Voltaire's feud with the poet J. B. Rousseau was assuming more importance, and was both complicated and embittered by a quarrel with the journalist Desfontaines, editor of the "Observations," referred to in the course of the repast. As we shall be obliged very soon to return to this affair, and show how authors and critics loved one another a hundred and forty years ago, it is only necessary here to say that Voltaire at this time was gunpowder to any spark of allusion to Rousseau or Desfontaines. Madame de Grafigny describes her first meal at the châteaueau : —

"I was conducted to a suite of apartments which I recognized at once to be Voltaire's. He came to receive me. No one else had arrived, and yet I had not the time to cast a glance around the room. The company placed themselves at the table, and well content was I ; and all the more when I compared this supper with my evening adventure on the road. What a thing is life ! said I to myself. A little while ago in darkness and mire ; now in an enchanted place. What is there that we did not speak of ? Poetry, science, art ; all in the tone of badinage and good breeding. I should like to be able to report to you that charming conversation, that enchanting conversation ; but it is not in me to do so. The supper was not abundant, but it was rare, elegant, and delicate ; served, also, with a profusion of silver plate. Opposite me I had five globes and all the philosophical apparatus ; for it was in the little hall that we enjoyed this unique

repast. Voltaire by my side, as polite, as attentive, as he is amiable and learned; the lord of the castle on the other side. This is to be my place every evening: thus my left ear will be sweetly charmed, while the other is very slightly bored; for the marquis says little, and goes away as soon as we leave the table. At the dessert comes the perfume; conversation as instructive as agreeable. They spoke of books, as you may well believe, and J. B. Rousseau was a topic. Oh, by our Lady! then the man remained, and the hero vanished. He would scarcely pardon any one who should praise Rousseau. At last the conversation turned upon the various kinds of poetry. 'For my part,' said the lady, 'odes [Rousseau wrote many] I cannot endure.' 'Ah, indeed!' said, your idol; 'what is an ode? It is the most trifling merit to compose one. Fustian, rhapsodies, in the style of Hudibras; it is the most execrable thing in the world. I do not comprehend how honest people read such things.'

"Is not there the man? I know not how he came to speak of the 'Observations' of Desfontaines. I asked him if he had sent for them. 'Yes,' said he; and all at once he launched invectives against the author and against the work. He gave me a pamphlet to read, entitled 'A Preservative against the Observations' (Voltaire's own), which he pretends was written by one of his friends. I believe that he could not speak of Rousseau and Desfontaines without a fermentation of the blood equivalent to fever. But as it seized him we retired in order to let him go to bed.

"I have read that 'Preservative,' for it was very necessary that I should be able to say that I had read it. In sending to ask how I was, Voltaire presented to me a beautiful Newton, bound in morocco. As I do not dine to-day, I began to read Newton, instead of writing to you. Yes, my friend, instead of writing to you, although I was dying of desire to write; but you will feel how necessary it is that I should show a little eagerness in recognizing the polite and honorable attention of your idol, and to be able to speak to him of the work in the evening."

The next day Madame de Grafigny had the pleasure of inspecting Voltaire's rooms, and penned a glowing account of them to her friend:—

"Voltaire made me a little visit. I drove him out, because my room is very chilly, and he had a very bad cold. To drive out Voltaire! Ah, *Dieu!* you find that a very strong expression, and so it is; but it is thus that we become familiar with great men when we live with them. Then came in the lord of the castle (not yet gone to Brussels), who bored me pitilessly for two hours and a half. At last, Voltaire, half

an hour before supper, got me away by sending me a message that, since I was unwilling he should remain in my chamber, I should take the trouble of going down to his. I did not hold out against this invitation, and I descended at once. I had only seen his rooms in passing, but now he made me admire them, and I will give you a description of them.

“His little wing is so close to the château that the door of it is at the bottom of the grand staircase. There is, first, a small ante-chamber, as large as your hand; then comes his bedroom, which is small, low, and hung with crimson velvet, with an alcove (for the bed) of the same, set off with gold fringe. That is the furniture for winter. There is little tapestry in his rooms, but a great deal of wainscoting, in which are framed some charming pictures. There are mirrors, brackets of admirable enamel, porcelains, a clock sustained by grotesque figures; a world of things of that nature, costly, rare, and, above all, so spotlessly clean that you could kiss the floor. There is an open case containing a service of silver; there is everything which the *superflu, chose si nécessaire*, has been able to devise. And what silver! what workmanship! There is a casket containing twelve rings of cut stone, besides two of diamonds. From this room we pass into the little hall, which is not more than thirty or forty feet in length. Between the windows are two extremely beautiful statuettes upon pedestals of Indian lacquer: one is the Venus Farnese, the other Hercules. The other side of the windows is occupied by two cases: one for books, and one for the apparatus. Between the two cases there is a stove in the wall, which renders the air like that of spring. In front of the stove is a large pedestal, upon which there is a Cupid of some magnitude who is discharging an arrow, — an unfinished work, for they are making a sculptured niche for that Cupid which will conceal the stove entirely. The following is the inscription below this Cupid: —

‘Whoe’er thou art, thy master he,
He is, or was, or ought to be.’

“The gallery is wainscoted and varnished light yellow. Clocks, tables, bureaux, — I need not say that nothing of that kind is wanting. Beyond is the dark chamber, which is not yet finished; nor is the one completed where he intends to put his apparatus; and this is the reason why it is all now in the hall. There is but a single sofa, and no commodious arm-chairs; I mean that the few which are there are good, but there are no stuffed arm-chairs, — bodily ease not being his luxury, as it seems. The panels of the wainscot are of India paper, extremely beautiful; the screens are of the same. There are writing-tables, porcelains, and all in a taste extremely elegant. There is one door which opens into the garden, and outside of the door is a very

pretty grotto. You will be very glad, I think, to have an idea of the temple of your idol, since you cannot see it."

On the following day the guest had an opportunity to examine the rooms of Madame du Châtelet, which astonished her exceedingly.

"To-day I came down at eleven o'clock for coffee, which is taken in the new hall. Voltaire was in his dressing-gown, but he has a very bad cold. We did not go to mass, for it is not a fête day here. They spoke of the eternal lawsuit during the whole breakfast, which lasted an hour and a half. Voltaire began to write, and we — the lady of the castle and myself — went into her part of the château to see it, because I had not yet examined it. Voltaire's rooms are nothing in comparison with hers. Her bedroom is wainscoted in light yellow, and varnished with light blue mouldings; an alcove for the bed of the same, lined with charming paper of India. The bed is of watered blue silk, and the whole is so assorted that, even to the basket for her dog, all is yellow and blue; the wood of the arm-chairs, also, the desk, bureau, and brackets. The mirrors and their silver frames are of an admirable brilliancy. A great door of plate-glass opens into the library, which is not yet finished. The carving is as fine as that of a snuff-box; nothing can be prettier than the whole effect. There are to be mirrors in this room, and pictures by Paul Veronese and others. On one side of the alcove for the bed is a little boudoir, so exquisite that, on entering it, one is ready to fall upon one's knees. The walls of this boudoir are blue, and the ceiling was painted and varnished by a pupil of Martin, who has been here three years. All the small panels are filled with pictures by Watteau: the Five Senses, the Two Tales of La Fontaine, the Kiss Taken and Returned, of which I have the two engravings, and Brother Philip's Geese. Ah, what pictures! The frames are gilt and filigree. I saw there also the Three Graces, as beautiful and lovely as the mother of the tender Cupids. There is a fire-place with brackets by Martin, with some pretty things upon them, among others an amber writing-desk, which the Prince of Prussia sent her with some verses. The only furniture is a large arm-chair stuffed in white taffeta, and two stools to match; for, thanks be to God, I have not seen one couch in all the house. This divine boudoir has a single window, which looks out upon a charming terrace and an admirable view. On the other side of the alcove is a *garde robe*, divine, paved with marble, wainscoted in linen-gray, with the prettiest engravings. Indeed, the very muslin curtains of the windows are bordered with exquisite taste. No; there is nothing in the world so pretty!

"After having examined the rooms we remained in her chamber.

She then related to me the history of that lawsuit of hers, from its origin, about eighty years ago, down to the present day. This little conversation lasted more than an hour and a half, and, strange to say, it did not fatigue me. That, however, was natural enough; she talks so well that *ennui* has not time to get a hearing. She also showed me her jewel-case, which is more beautiful than that of Madame de Richelieu. I do not cease wondering at it, for when she was at Craon she had only one shell snuff-box; now she has fifteen or twenty of gold and precious stones, as well as some of enamel and enameled gold, a new mode, which must be of very high price; as many *navettes* of the same kind, each more magnificent than the rest; watches of jasper adorned with diamonds; some elegant boxes, immense things. She has also rings of rare stones, and trinkets without end and of all kinds. In fact, I still wonder at it, for her family has never been rich."

Madame de Grafigny's own room was in dismal contrast to these splendors: —

"But you must know what sort of a chamber I have. In height and size it is a hall, where all the winds disport, entering by a thousand crevices around the window, which I will have stopped if God gives me life. This immense room has but a single window, cut into three, according to the ancient fashion, having no protection except six shutters. The wainscoting, which is whitish, lessens a little the gloom of the apartment, dim from the little light that enters it, and the narrowness of the view; for an arid mountain, which I could almost touch with my hand, masks it completely. At the foot of this mountain is a little meadow, perhaps fifty feet wide, upon which a little stream is seen creeping with a thousand turns. The tapestry is of grand personages unknown to me, and ugly enough. There is an alcove hung with very rich cloths, but unpleasing to the sight through their ill-assorted colors. As to the fire-place, there is nothing to say of it; it is of such dimensions that all the *sabat* could be within range at the same moment. We burn in it about half a cord of wood every day, without in the least mollifying the air of the room. . . . Indeed, except the apartments of the lady and Voltaire, the château is dirty enough to disgust one. From the window, the gardens appear to be beautiful."

The guest had not been long at Cirey before she witnessed a tiff between the lovers: —

"About four in the afternoon, as I was reading, I was sent for to come down-stairs. I found the lady, who was going to bed, as she was not quite well. She said to me that, as she could not work, Vol-

taire was going to read us his tragedy of 'Mérope.' Voltaire arrives. The lady takes a fancy to make him put on another coat. The one he had on, it is true, was not very nice, but it was well powdered, and had upon it fine lace. He gave her many good reasons for not changing it, as, that it would give him a chill, and that he would catch cold for nothing. At last, he was obliging enough to send for his *valet de chambre*, that he might get him another coat. The valet, at the moment, could not be found, and Voltaire believed that the subject would be dropped. Not at all; the persecution recommenced. Vivacity seizes Voltaire; he speaks to her warmly in English, and leaves the room. Madame sends, a moment after, to call him back. He replies that he has the colic, and behold 'Mérope' at the devil. I was furious. The lady begged me to read aloud the dialogues of M. Algarotti. I read and laughed, as in the morning. At length, a gentleman of the neighborhood came in, whereupon I rose, saying that I was going to see Voltaire. The lady told me to try and bring him back. I found him with the lady who is staying here [Madame Champbouin], who, I may remark, seems to me to be in his confidence. He was in the best humor, having forgotten that he had the colic. We had already talked a little while, when the lady of the château sent to call us. At length he went back to her; and this man, who had just been laughing with us, resumed his ill-humor on reëntering her chamber, under the pretext of the colic. He put himself into a corner, and said not a word. Some time after, the neighbor went out, upon which the pouters spoke to one another in English, and, a minute after, 'Mérope' appeared upon the scene. This is the first sign of love that I have observed; for they behave with an admirable decency. *But she renders his life a little hard [un peu dure].*¹

"I send you this long detail in order that you may understand how they are together. At last, he read two acts of 'Mérope.' I shed tears at the first. . . . After the reading we discussed the piece—the lady and I—until supper-time. She does not like it, and turns it into ridicule as much as she can; which little pleases poor Voltaire, who was like a patient, not daring to join in our discussion. . . . The author was so afraid of another quarrel that the little which he said was against me. The supper was like a supper of Lunéville; we beat our sides for something to say, and no one said a word. After supper we looked at the globe,—Voltaire, the fat lady, and myself; for the lovely nymph spoke not, pretending to be asleep.

"Voltaire is always charming, and also always occupied with my amusement. His attention is unwearying, and it is evident that he is fearful of my becoming bored. He is much mistaken. To be bored

¹ All the italics in these extracts are those of Madame de Grafigny.

near Voltaire! Ah, *Dieu!* that is not possible; I have not even the leisure to think that there is such a thing as *ennui* in the world. I have the health of a fish-woman, and wake as easily as a mouse. Is it because I eat less, or because my mind is so vividly and agreeably acted upon? . . . It is a pleasure for me to laugh inwardly at their fanaticism for Newton, and to hear people of the best understanding utter imbecilities [*des bêtises*] dictated by prejudice. I do not dispute, as you may believe, but I get my profit from it in a knowledge of the human mind."

Madame continued daily to record incidents and traits. I add a few paragraphs: —

"After breakfast, the goddess of these haunts took it into her head to have a ride in her *calèche*. I cared little to go, on account of her horses, which are like ill-governed children. At length, I was so much pressed that I consented to go. But, *ma foi!* when I saw the gambols of those *messieurs* I could not muster the courage to get into the carriage. Nevertheless, I should have been obliged to get in but for the humane Voltaire, who said that it was ridiculous to force obliging people to take pleasures which for them were pains. Adorable words, were they not? So I remained at home with our lady guest, who is as idle as I. We had a walk together, and then she took me to see the bath-rooms. Ah, what an enchanting place! The ante-chamber is of the size of your bed; the bath-room itself is entirely lined with porcelain tiles, except the pavement, which is marble. Then there is a dressing-room of the same size, the wainscoting of which is enameled with a clear, brilliant sea-green, gay, divine, admirably carved and gilt; furniture to match, — a little sofa, charming little arm-chairs in the same style, all carved and gilt; brackets, porcelains, engravings, pictures, and a toilet-table; the ceiling painted; the chamber rich, and equal to the cabinet in all respects, with mirrors, and amusing books upon enameled tables. Everything seemed to be made for the people of Lilliput. No; there is nothing there so pretty, so delicious, and so enchanting as this place. If I had a suite of apartments like that, I would have myself roused in the middle of the night to see it. The fire-place is not larger than an ordinary arm-chair, but it is a jewel to put in your pocket. . . . After supper Voltaire gave us the magic lantern, accompanying the exhibition with words to make you die of laughter. He exhibited all the circle of the Duke de Richelieu, the history of the Abbé Desfontaines, and all sorts of tales, always in the manner of a Savoyard. No; there was never anything so funny!"

"Yesterday at supper Voltaire was of a charming gayety. He told us some stories which are not good except from his mouth. He told

me some anecdotes of Boileau that are not in print. There were some impromptu verses, also, which I will send you if he will dictate them to me. I leave you to imagine the pleasure there is in living with such people. But wait; I still have something to say to you. This morning the lady of the house read us a geometrical calculation of an English dreamer, who pretends to demonstrate that the inhabitants of Jupiter are of the same height as King G., (*sic*) of whom the Scripture speaks. The book was in Latin, and she read it to us in French. She hesitated a moment at each period, and I supposed that it was to understand the calculations, which are given at length in the book. But no; she translated easily the mathematical terms; the numbers, the extravagances, nothing stopped her. Is not that really astonishing?"

The Abbé de Breteuil, a brother of Madame du Châtelet, passed nine days at the château, and during his stay there were gay doings. This gentleman was a genuine abbé of the period, having nothing of the ecclesiastic except his title and revenue. Gay were the suppers now, for the abbé had a true churchman's stock of stories of the untranslatable kind, which drew from Voltaire his ample quota; and, between them, they made Madame de Grafigny laugh "to split her spleen," as she remarked. She gives some specimens of these comic tales, which serve to show that neither sex, nor profession, nor rank, was a restraint upon the license of the tongue in those good old times of the *régime*. They were such stories as a party of young fellows might be supposed to tell in the last hour of a convivial party, innocent enough, but not repeatable. Now, too, "La Pucelle" was brought out from Madame du Châtelet's desk, and the author read a canto or two almost every night to the abbé and the ladies, much to the delight of Madame de Grafigny, who wrote an outline of each canto for the amusement of her correspondent; and he, in his turn, was infinitely entertained by them. "The canto of Jeanne [he wrote, in one of his replies] is charming." Madame de Grafigny gives the routine of a day during the abbé's stay at the château:—

"Between half past ten and half past one, they summon every one to coffee, which is taken in Voltaire's hall. The meal usually lasts an hour, more or less. Precisely at noon, the people who are called here the coachmen go to dinner. These coachmen are *the lord of the castle, the fat lady, and her son*; the latter never appearing

except when there is something to be copied. After coffee, we — that is to say, Voltaire, madame, and myself — remain half an hour. Then he makes us a low bow, and tells us to go away; upon which we return to our rooms. Toward four o'clock, sometimes, we take a slight repast. At nine we sup, and remain together till midnight. *Dieu!* what suppers! They are always the suppers of Damocles. All the pleasures are in attendance; but, alas, how short is the time! Oh, *mon Dieu!* Nothing is wanting to them, not even the Damocles sword, which is represented by the swift flight of time. The lord of the castle takes his place at the table, does not eat, falls asleep, consequently says not a word, and goes out with the tray. . . . Yesterday, after supper, there was a charming scene. Voltaire had the pouts on account of a glass of Rhine wine which madame prevented his drinking; he would not read Jeanne, as he had promised, being in an extremely bad humor. The brother and myself, by force of pleasantries, succeeded at last in restoring him. The lady, who was also pouting, was unable to keep it up. All this made a scene of delicious jests, which lasted a long time, finishing with a canto of Jeanne, which was no better than that scene."

More serious readings were given sometimes, such as Voltaire's "Epistles upon Man;" but, as these poems contained passages reflecting more or less openly upon Rousseau and Desfontaines, they were occasionally accompanied by explosions of what the French politely call "vivacity." Madame du Châtelet remarked, one morning at breakfast, that, in the Epistle upon Envy, which the poet had just read, there was too much about Rousseau. "If he were dead [said Voltaire], I would have him dug up to hang him." Madame de Grafigny deplored his "fanaticism" with regard to these two men. "I have just come [she writes] from a terrible conversation upon them, in which we tried to persuade him to despise them. Oh, human weakness! He has neither rhyme nor reason when he speaks of them. It is he who has the engravings (caricatures of them) made, and he who composes the verses underneath. What weakness! And what ridicule it will bring upon him! Really my heart bleeds at it, for I love him; yes, I love him; he has so many good qualities that it is a pity to see in him such miserable foibles. . . . He never hears a good action spoken of without emotion."

Indeed, madame praises warmly the amiable qualities of Voltaire, particularly his singular patience in sickness, his

gratitude for attentions paid him when he was sick, his tender sympathy with her when she told him the terrible details of her miserable marriage, his frequent generousities, his thoughtful and laborious care for the guests of the house. To entertain the abbé the theatre was reopened, and such was Voltaire's zeal that in one day and night he made his company of volunteers rehearse and perform thirty-three acts of tragedy, opera, and comedy. The housekeeping was on a very liberal scale; thirty-six fires blazed in the château, requiring six cords of wood every day. Madame de Graigny relates a kitchen anecdote:—

“Eight days ago, a female servant broke an earthen pot over the head of a lackey of Voltaire, which kept him in bed till yesterday. They dismissed the girl, and kept back a crown from her wages, which they gave to the lackey. At breakfast, yesterday, your idol's valet mentioned that the lackey had given back the crown to the servant. ‘Bring him here,’ said Voltaire. ‘Why did you give back the crown?’ ‘Eh-eh-eh, monsieur’ (for he is a booby), ‘it was because I am almost well, and the girl is sorry for having hurt me.’ ‘Céran (that is the valet's name), give a crown to this queer fellow for the one he gave back; and another one to teach him what good actions deserve. Go, go, my lad; you are very fortunate in knowing how to behave. Always behave well.’”

After the departure of the abbé, the gayeties came to an end, and the two personages of the château settled to their work once more, laboring with ceaseless impetuosity; Voltaire growing ever more restive under the envenomed attacks of his enemies in Paris.

“Madame spends almost every night in work, even until five and seven in the morning. She makes the stout lady's son, who is a good Israelite, stay in her room copying her works, of which he does not understand a word. You think, perhaps, that she must sleep until three in the afternoon. Not at all; she gets up at nine or ten in the morning; and even rises at six when she goes to bed at four, which she calls going to bed at cock-crow. In short, she sleeps but two hours a day, and, in the course of the twenty-four hours, only leaves her desk for breakfast, which lasts an hour, and for supper, and an hour after. Sometimes she eats a morsel at five o'clock in the afternoon, but at her desk, and very rarely. On the other hand, when Voltaire takes a fancy to leave his work for half a quarter of an hour, to pay a visit to me and the stout lady, he does not sit down, and

says, 'It is frightful, the time we lose in talking; we ought not to lose a minute; the greatest waste we can make is that of time.' This is his daily remark. We come to supper while he is still at his desk; we have half done supper when he leaves it; and we have to use force to keep him from going back as soon as he leaves the table. He beats his sides [*il se bat les flancs*] to tell us some stories during the repast; and we perceive that it is from pure politeness, for his spirit is far away. . . . Voltaire is the unhappiest man in the world. He knows his value, and approbation is almost indifferent to him; but for that very reason one word of his adversaries reduces him to what we call despair. It is the only thing that occupies him, and it drowns him in bitterness. I cannot give you an idea of this folly, except in telling you that it is more powerful and more wretched than his mind is great and broad. . . . He drags himself without ceasing. He has got it into his head that he must not eat. Judge of the happiness of these people whom we supposed to have attained supreme felicity! I should like to be able to tell you all that I think of it, but between the tree and the bark one must not put a finger."

Unhappily, Madame de Grafigny, prudent as she meant to be, *did* get her finger between the tree and the bark. In the innocence of her heart, overflowing with admiration for the genius of Voltaire, she was accustomed to copy portions of his "Louis XIV." and give outlines of cantos of "La Pucelle," in her letters to her friend, evidently thinking only to gratify a warm lover of the author. Madame du Châtelet, following the example of her king, opened the letters that came to and left the château. Madame de Grafigny, discovering this, became cautious as to what she said, and used feigned names for the persons mentioned in her letters. But, one day, the lady of the château read in a letter from Lunéville to her guest the fatal words given above, "*The canto of Jeanne is charming.*" She jumped to the conclusion that Madame de Grafigny had copied a canto and sent it to her friend. Terrified and indignant, she flew to Voltaire, who was sick, sore, and exasperated from his warfare with enemies in Paris. Awful scenes followed. The tempest broke upon the poor lady after one of those suppers which had usually been so merry and delicious.

"The 29th of December, on the arrival of the post, they told me there were no letters for me. Supper passed as usual, without much conversation, and without my observing anything which could give me warning of the storm they were preparing for me. Supper over,

I withdrew quietly to my room to seal a letter which I had written to you. Half an hour after, I saw coming in you will easily guess whom. I was extremely surprised, for he never came into my apartment; but much more astonished was I when he said to me: 'I am lost! My life is in your hands!' 'Oh, *mon Dieu!* How is that?' said I. 'How is that?' he cried. 'It is that a hundred copies are in circulation of the canto of Jeanne. This instant I fly! I seek refuge in Holland, at the end of the world, — I don't know where. M. du Châtelet starts for Lunéville. You must write at once to Panpan [M. Deveaux, her friend] to secure his assistance in getting back all those copies. Is he honest man enough to do it?' I assured him, with the utmost sincerity, that you would render all the services in your power. 'Very well, then,' said he, 'write quick, and earnestly.' 'I will do so!' I exclaimed. 'I am delighted to seize this opportunity to show you all my zeal.' Nevertheless, I told him how much it afflicted me that such a thing should happen while I was here.

'At this he rose, furious, and said to me: 'No prevarication, madame! It is you who sent the copy.' At these words I fell from the clouds. I assured him that I had never read nor written a single verse of it. He insisted, nevertheless, that it was you who distributed the copies, and that *you* had said I had sent the canto to you. Upon hearing this, I saw, like a flash, that some one of the hundred thousand persons to whom he has shown this poem had kept a canto, and that it was circulating, while I was here without my being able to clear myself of suspicion. Alas! a circumstance so distressing drove me to despair. I repeated, with the accent of truth, but always with a deafening vivacity, that it was not I. He declared, in his turn, that you had read the canto to Desmarests, at a lady's house; that you were giving copies of it to everybody; and that Madame du Châtelet had the proof of it in her pocket.

* "What could I say? Oh, my friend, I was in utter consternation. You will perceive that I understood nothing of all this, and that it was impossible I should; but not the less frightened was I on that account. At last, he said to me, 'Come, come, write and tell him to send you back the original and the copies.' I began to write; and as I could not ask you to return what I had not sent you, I begged you to inform yourself of what had happened, and to communicate to me whatever you might learn. He read my letter, and, throwing it back to me, he exclaimed, 'Oh, fie, madame! You should be sincere when the very life of a poor unfortunate like me is in danger.'

"The more I talked, the less I convinced him. I was silent. This frightful scene lasted at least an hour; but it was nothing to what was coming; it was reserved for the lady to put the climax to it. She

came into my room like a fury, screaming with passion and repeating almost the same things, while I still kept silence. Then she drew a letter from her pocket, and, almost thrusting it into my face, cried out, 'See, see the proof of your infamy! You are the most unworthy of creatures! You are a monster, whom I took into my house, not from friendship, for I had none for you, but because you knew not where else to go; and you have had the infamy to betray me, to assassinate me, to steal from my desk a work for the purpose of copying it!'

"Ah, my poor friend, where were you? The thunder-bolt which falls at the feet of the solitary traveler overwhelms him less than these words overwhelmed me. This is all I can recollect of the torrent of insults which she uttered; for I was so distracted that I soon ceased to hear and understand her. But she said much more, and unless Voltaire had restrained her she would have boxed my ears. To all that she said I only replied, 'Oh, be silent, madame; I am too unhappy for you to treat me so unworthily!'

"At these words Voltaire seized her round the waist, and snatched her away from me; for she said all this right in my teeth, and with such violent gestures that at every moment I expected she would strike me. When she had been removed, she strode up and down the room, uttering loud exclamations upon my infamy. Observe, all this was uttered in so loud a voice that Dubois [maid of Madame Graffigny], who was two rooms off, heard every word. For my part, I was long without the power to pronounce a syllable; I was neither dead nor alive.

"At last, I asked to see the letter. She told me I should not have it. 'At least,' said I, 'show me what there is in it so decisive against me.' She did so, and I saw this unfortunate phrase: '*The canto of Jeanne is charming.*' Instantly that gave me the secret of this scene, which I had not before thought of. I at once gave them the explanation, and told them what I had written to you of the impression which the canto had made upon me when I had heard it read. To his credit I say it, Voltaire believed me at once, and immediately asked my forgiveness.

"The affair was then explained to me as it had appeared to *them*. He told me that you had read my letter to Desmarets in the hearing of a man who had written an account of it to M. du Châtelet; and that, upon reading that letter, they had opened yours to me, which had confirmed them in their error. This scene lasted until five o'clock in the morning.

"Megara [madame] was slow to give in. Poor Voltaire talked to her a long time in English without making any impression upon her;

then he teased her to make her say that she believed my story, and that she was sorry for what she had said to me. They made me write and ask you to send me back my letter, in order that I might justify myself entirely. I wrote with extreme pain; I gave them my letter, and they went away; but I did not cease to tremble until they had been gone for a long time.

“In the midst of the uproar, the stout lady (Madame de Champbonin) entered, but immediately went out, and I did not see her again until they had been gone an hour. She found me vomiting, and in a frightful state; for reflection only redoubled my grief. She went down-stairs again, and, a moment after, brought me back the letter I had written, saying that they believed me upon my word alone, and that it was useless to write. *Dieu!* in what a condition I was! Until noon I was in perfect despair, and you will not be surprised at it if you realize the situation in which I was, — without a home, without money, and insulted in a house which I could not leave. Madame de — was at Commercy, and I had not a single *sou* to pay my expenses to the next village, where I should have slept better upon straw than in a chamber which I could not look upon again without horror. What was to become of me, O my Panpan? The good stout lady was the only one who had shown me any humanity; but, as she believed still that I had copied that cursed canto, and as she is strongly attached to the family, she gave me but cold consolation.

“At last, about noon, the good Voltaire came in. He was moved even to tears at my condition. He made me the most emphatic excuses. Many times he asked my forgiveness, and I had an opportunity to see all the tenderness of his heart. He made me give him my word of honor that I would not ask the return of the fatal letter, and I gave it to him.

“At five o'clock in the evening M. du Châtelet came in with a contrite air, and said to me, gently, that he advised me to send for my letter; not that they did not believe my word, but just to confound them. I objected that I had given my word not to do it, and that I was afraid, since I did not doubt that my letters were opened, that they would take it ill if I broke my promise. Nevertheless he insisted so strongly, and so well persuaded me that my letter should not be opened, that at last I promised him I would write. It required a whole hour of reflection for me to see through the trick; for I had no more the faculty of thinking. I passed three days and three nights in tears.

“Ah! I forgot to say that the same evening, about eight o'clock, Megara came with all her train, and, after a formal courtesy, said, in a very dry tone, ‘Madame, I am sorry for what passed last night.’

And then she spoke of other things with the fat lady and her husband, as tranquilly as people speak when they rise in the morning."

For three weeks Madame de Graigny was prostrate, or, as she expressed it, "in hell," always sick, and not leaving her room till nine in the evening. At length the letter arrived in which she had described the canto, which made her innocence manifest. Even then Madame du Châtelet was cold and formal, not being able to forgive herself for her violence. Voltaire was all contrition and assiduity.

"More than once he shed tears on seeing me so ill, never entering my chamber without making me the most humble and pathetic excuses, and redoubling his care that I should want nothing. Often he went so far as to say that madame was a terrible woman, who had no flexibility in her heart, although she had a good heart."

Gradually, life at the château resumed its usual train; even Megara relented, and there was an approach to the former gaiety and ease. The guest appears to have remained at Cirey about three months, not six, as the title-page of her letters imports. She contrived in the spring of 1739 to get away to Paris, where she lived the rest of her life upon a small pension from the Austrian court, increased at a later day by the profits of her works. Voltaire remained to the end of her life her affectionate friend and correspondent, congratulating her upon her literary successes, and giving her the aid which an established author can give to one beginning a career.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE ABBÉ DESFONTAINES.

NOTHING that Madame de Grafigny observed at Cirey surprised her so much as Voltaire's sensitiveness to the attacks of a hostile press. The mere mention of the editor Desfontaines or of the poet J. B. Rousseau was enough sometimes to put him in a passion. One evening in February, 1739, as she records, they were going to play a comedy at the château; the guests were assembled and the actors were ready, when the mail arrived, bringing him some disagreeable letters. "He uttered frightful cries, and fell into a kind of convulsions. Madame du Châtelet at length came into my room, with tears in her eyes as big as her fist, and begged me not to perform. The curtain did not rise. Yesterday he had some good intervals, and we played. *Mon Dieu!* what a donkey [*bête*] he is, — he who has so much intellect!"

Madame de Grafigny, like many other guests, did not penetrate the secret of the house she inhabited. She was very far from knowing what was the matter with the inmates of the château, and naturally surmised it to be some new offense committed against a too susceptible author of weak digestion by a robust, unscrupulous critic. This may well have seemed to her a trifling cause of effects so dire; for of all the ills we see others suffer, there are few which we bear with more composure than their abuse by the press. We are amazed that they should take it seriously. Nevertheless, when it is our turn to roast, we do not find the process agreeable; and no people feel so acutely the anguish inflicted by the pen as those whose profession it is to use that instrument of torture.

Voltaire had particular reasons for resenting the Abbé Desfontaines's faint praise and covert satire. It was not his clerical garb and title; for he had resigned a small country benefice in order to devote himself to literature, and was now

only an abbé in title. Piron, probably, had the true reason in mind when he made his well-known retort. Desfontaines, seeing Piron enter the Café Procope, very handsomely dressed, said to him, "M. Piron, does such a coat as this become a poet?" To which Piron replied, "Does such a man as this become such a coat?"

In 1724, when Desfontaines was a writer for such literary journals as there were then in Paris, he was introduced by Thieriot to Voltaire, who was polite to him, and alluded to him in a friendly tone in his letters. A few weeks after this introduction, the abbé was arrested on an unnamable charge; a boy chimney-sweep the alleged victim. The crime, in the severe code of that age, was punishable by burning alive; and as several cases had lately been reported, it was thought that an example was needed. The officers of the law were preparing the indictment, when the abbé wrote to Voltaire informing him of his danger. It was at the time of the poet's brief favor with Madame de Prie, mistress of the Duke de Bourbon, prime minister. He flew to Fontainebleau, and, using all that zeal and tact which he was wont to use when a friend needed his aid, he procured an order for the discharge of the prisoner on the simple condition of his leaving Paris. The abbé left Paris, and Voltaire again interposed in his behalf, endeavoring to get permission for his return. He spoke to M. de Fleury on the subject, found him prejudiced against the accused, but succeeded, after further efforts, in obtaining the remission of his exile, and the abbé resumed his vocation in Paris.

The letter in which he poured forth his gratitude to Voltaire has been preserved. "I shall never forget, monsieur," it began, "the infinite obligations I am under to you. Your good heart is far above even your genius; and you are the truest friend that ever existed. The zeal with which you have served me does me, in some sort, more honor than the malice and depravity of my enemies have given me of affront."¹

Whether Desfontaines was guilty or innocent of the offense charged cannot be known, because his case was never tried. Nor does his avoiding a trial imply guilt. Men who could bring such an accusation against a writer in revenge for satirical or abusive paragraphs would not stick at making or

¹ 1 Œuvres de Voltaire, 255.

buying testimony, and the most innocent person in that age and country might shrink from a trial involving such painful possibilities. He told Voltaire, in the letter just quoted, that he had a plan of a defense in his mind which he thought would be "beautiful and curious," and which he was going to work out in the country; for it would not become him to be silent "under so execrable an affront." This defense, however, never appeared. One thing only is certain: Voltaire rendered Desfontaines a very great service.

Time passed. Voltaire spent his three years in England, returned, and continued his brilliant career. Desfontaines, after working upon and conducting various journals, established, in 1735, a literary weekly, which he called "Observations sur tous les Ouvrages Nouveaux," in which he displayed no more than the usual perversity of ancient critics. At present a book sent to the critical periodicals for review is usually assigned to reviewers specially qualified; but in that period the conductor was man-of-all-work, and felt himself obliged to assume an editorial superiority on every subject and in every kind of literature. Thus, Desfontaines, when Newton became a topic of general interest in France, knowing nothing of Newton but what he had read in Voltaire's English Letters, treated the new philosophy with contemptuous freedom. "Newtonism," said he, "is bad science, reproated by all the good philosophers of Europe. . . . Newton was no philosopher; only a geometer, an observer, a calculator. Such terms as *vacuum*, *absolute gravitation*, *attraction of gravitation*, are the contemptible jargon of peripateticism, — a jargon long ago despised and proscribed in all the schools of Europe."¹

Although this was the fashionable tone in France, in 1735, upon the Newtonian philosophy, the sentences quoted were doubtless aimed at the man who had plucked the writer of them as a brand from the burning in 1724.

Desfontaines, in fact, soon forgot his obligations to his deliverer. He took offense, as it seems, from a trifling cause. Having published a French translation of Voltaire's English Essay upon Epic Poetry, the author of that work found it so swarming with errors that he translated it anew himself, and

¹ ² L'Esprit de l'Abbé Desfontaines, 62.

published it, as it were, in opposition to Desfontaines's translation. One mistake of the abbé's made a good deal of sport at the time. The English word *cakes* baffled him, and he concluded it to be an English form of *Cacus*, the Latin name of Vulcan's robber son. Voltaire, it seems, wrote, "the cakes eaten by the Trojans," which the learned abbé translated, *la faim devorante de Cacus*. Desfontaines, from this time, we are told, held his obligations to Voltaire annulled, and treated him in his journals with no particular consideration. He commended some of his tragedies, damned his "Charles XII." with the faintest praise and sly insinuation, criticised "*La Henriade*" with freedom, and, in general, wrote of his works without favor but with no very noticeable severity. Voltaire did not enjoy the perusal of the "Observations." He thought them arrogant, ignorant, and tasteless. He laughed when Desfontaines, who still plumed himself upon his English, styled Bishop Berkeley's "Alciphron" a *defense* of atheism. "I repent," he wrote to Cideville in 1735, "having saved Desfontaines. After all, it is better to burn a priest than to bore the public. If I had left him to cook, I should have spared the public many imbecilities."

Personal ill-will grew between them. Voltaire, with some reason, suspected Desfontaines of writing bookseller Jore's attack, — a piece done evidently by a practiced hand. He thought, too, that the abbé was in league with detested Rousseau, traitor to the freedom of utterance, with whom Voltaire was at open war. Desfontaines knew no moderation when Rousseau was to be extolled, and he praised him in terms that seemed designed to meet Voltaire's censure. Voltaire, for example, liked to remind the public that Rousseau was a *mere* poet, and a poet who excelled only in one or two kinds. Desfontaines began an eulogium by remarking that Rousseau was "a great master in all the kinds and in all the styles;" as admirable in his theory of the poetic art as in the poems by which he illustrated it. Voltaire reflected upon Rousseau's family, his father having been an excellent shoemaker and a good citizen. Desfontaines wrote, "Every man of letters who becomes distinguished, every celebrated author, is a nobleman." Rousseau, he added, was of illustrious origin, — a descendant of Homer, Virgil, Pindar, and Horace; nay, a son of Apollo and Calliope.

This was a good and fair retort. His notice of Voltaire's Newton was extremely exasperating, and was obviously meant to be so.

“To have [said he] a sovereign contempt for the scientific system that has dazzled M. de Voltaire, it is only necessary to recall one's mind to the great principles of clear ideas [*aux grands principes des idées claires.*] Happily, there are in his book many other things not connected with that bad system, to which we cannot refuse our esteem, such as the observations of Newton and other scientific men and astronomers upon light and color. These, however, were long ago known and adopted in France, and they are taught in the schools. M. de Voltaire has, nevertheless, the glory of having compiled them with care, and of having published them in French. If he has fallen into some mistakes, persons who are versed in those elevated subjects easily perceive his errors.”

Every sentence of this was barbed and poisoned for a susceptible author living a hundred and fifty miles off, and laboring under the conviction that this perverse and ignorant editor was “the oracle of the provinces,” and whose journal actually had a large circulation. Worse offenses increased the ill-feeling between them. Desfontaines published a private letter addressed to him by Voltaire, asking him to state, “in two lines,” that the edition of his “Julius Cæsar,” just out, was not published with the author's consent, and abounded in errors and alterations. Desfontaines, who had already written his review of the play, simply added to it this letter, much to the writer's disgust. There was a partial reconciliation between them, Voltaire being morbidly and excessively desirous to propitiate a man who, as it seemed to him, was lessening his hold upon the public, and giving courage to the powers who issued *lettres de cachet*. The favor of the public was his only safety. The most sensualized noble, the narrowest ecclesiastic, the meanest informer, had some feeling of the dangerous ridicule of molesting a man who was “shedding glory upon the king's reign;” for, under every form of government, in every degree and kind of civilization, the power that finally rules and sways, the king of kings and lord of lords, is Public Opinion. Voltaire was fighting for freedom of thought and utterance in Europe. He was fighting Rousseau's battle and Desfontaines's battle. His detestation of

those men was therefore a blending of all the ingredients of animosity, public and private, noble and personal.

The truce was broken by a foul blow on the part of the editor. The young and generous Count Algarotti, before starting upon his expedition to the polar seas, had spent a few days at Cirey, where Voltaire had addressed to him, on his departure, some pretty verses, which were, for many reasons, unfit for publication.

“Go,” said the poet, “and return bringing to the French people news of the pole observed and measured. I, meanwhile, will await your coming under my meridian, in the fields of Cirey, observing henceforth only the star of EMILY. Warned by the fire of her powerful genius, . . . I call to witness the heavens measured by your hands that I would not abandon her divine charms for the equator and the arctic pole.”

This poem of a dozen lines having, by some chance, fallen into the hands of Desfontaines, he wrote to the author, asking permission to insert it in his journal! We can imagine the consternation of the inmates of the château at the thought of such an indecorous promulgation of a secret known to Europe. All three of the persons interested — Voltaire, the Marquis du Châtelet, and madame — united in an earnest protest against its publication. Nevertheless, he published it.

The reader cannot desire to follow this quarrel through all its stages. Voltaire's minor poems of this period contain bitter satire of “the hireling scribe” who sold his wrath and adulation to the first comer; and the “Observations” teem with evidences of the editor's anger against his adversary. It is one of the calamitous limitations of literature that a battle, nay, a skirmish of outposts, that only lasts twenty minutes, demands, for its complete elucidation, more space than could usually be afforded to the most brilliant, the most important, the most enduring, triumph of peaceful exertion. About Waterloo there is a library; but no historian, I think, bestows two lines upon the publication, in 1624, of Lord Herbert's “*De Veritate*,” which began deism in Europe. I have before me several hundred printed pages upon this quarrel between Voltaire and Desfontaines. Let us come at once to the crisis of the strife.

In an evil hour for his own peace and dignity, Voltaire hit upon the expedient of applying to his reviewer the reviewer's most effective trick, that of gleaning the errors from a thousand pages, and grouping them in one page. No work can stand this treatment, if it is skillfully managed. Go carefully over a book containing ten thousand things; find some typographical errors, some lapses in style, some omissions, intentional and unintentional, several unimportant and two or three important mistakes, a few sentences which, severed from their connection, can easily be made to seem absurd; group all that with the tact of "an old hand," and you can make a review of a very good book that will cause provincial readers to pity the author, and wonder it should be considered safe to let him go loose. Voltaire took two hundred numbers of Desfontaines's weekly, subjected them to this familiar process, and published the result in a pamphlet, entitled "The Preservative" (*Le Préservatif*), a copy of which, as we have seen, he handed to Madame de Grafigny to read. This pamphlet of forty small pages bore the name in the title-page of the Chevalier de Mouhi, one of several poor fellows who hung about the office of the Abbé Moussinot to get an occasional louis d'or from Voltaire's charity.

It was not a difficult task to compose an effective pamphlet of this kind, for Desfontaines's ignorance of science was that of a French abbé of 1735, and, in literary matters, he made frequent slips, as all men must who write continually and on every topic. Thus, he wrote that Brutus was more a *Quaker* than a Stoic. "It is," remarked Voltaire, "as if he had said Brutus was more a Capuchin than a Stoic." A wonderful statement of the editor was that Seneca was a more *verbose* writer than Cicero. He had made, too, some ludicrous mis-translations from Latin, Italian, and English; he had displayed a singular and inveterate ignorance of Newton whenever he mentioned or alluded to him. Voltaire selected about fifty of his mistakes and misconceptions, appending to each a sentence or two of quiet satire; all tending to show "how *amusing* it was that such a man should take it into his head to sit in judgment upon others."

But this was not the sting of "Le Préservatif." Toward the close of his pamphlet, Voltaire made his Chevalier de Mouhi proceed thus:—

“Having read in these ‘Observations’ several attacks upon M. de Voltaire, as well as a letter which the editor boasted he had received from M. de Voltaire, I took the liberty to write myself to M. de Voltaire, though not acquainted with him. Here is his reply : —

“‘I only know the Abbé Guyot Desfontaines from M. Thieriot’s bringing him to my house in 1724 as a man who had formerly been a Jesuit, and hence a student. I received him with friendship, as I do all who cultivate literature. I was astonished at the end of fifteen days to receive a letter from him, written at Bicêtre [prison for criminals, near Paris], to which he had just been committed. I learned that he had been put into the Châtelet [prison in Paris] three months before for the same crime of which he was then accused, and that they were preparing to try him. At that time I was so fortunate as to have some very powerful friends, of whom death has since deprived me. Sick as I was, I hurried to Fontainebleau to throw myself at their feet. I pressed, I solicited, on all sides ; and, at last, obtained his release, and the discontinuance of a trial that involved a question of life or death. I also procured for him permission to retire to the country house of M. le Président de Bernières, my friend, and he went thither with M. Thieriot. Do you know what he did there? He wrote a libel against me. He even showed it to M. Thieriot, who made him throw it into the fire. He asked my pardon, saying that the libel was written a little before the time of his committal to Bicêtre. I had the weakness to forgive him, and that weakness has cost me a mortal enemy, who has written me anonymous letters, and who has sent twenty libels to Holland against me. Such, sir, are some of the things I can say concerning him.’”

This was a cutting stroke ; but, as the reader observes, there is no indication in the letter of the nature of the offense for which the abbé was committed to prison. As if to supply the deficiency, the author of “Le Préservatif,” while that pamphlet was passing through the press, set flying about Paris an epigram, in which the attacks of Desfontaines upon Newton were coupled with the offense of which he was accused : “He has taken everything *à rebours*, and his errors are *always* sins against nature.” Still worse, he caused a caricature to be engraved and published, representing the abbé on his knees receiving ignominious punishment for his alleged crime. Under the picture was another epigram by Voltaire, not describable, ending with an assurance that “God recompenses merit.”

When the matadore strikes between the horns with his slender and glittering blade, he must kill his bull on the instant, or look out for his horns. The bull will not refrain from vengeance because he is not skilled in the use of the matadore's brilliant weapon; he employs the means of offense that nature has given him, and the matadore expects nothing else. Desfontaines replied promptly to "Le Préservatif" in a pamphlet which he entitled "The Voltaire Mania [La Voltairomanie], or the Letter of a Young Advocate, in the Form of a Memorial." It was the attack of a bull blinded by rage, and Voltaire was justly punished by it for stooping either to conciliate or to assail such an adversary. The young advocate began by assuming that, in assaulting Voltaire, he was avenging outraged man.

"He has spared no one, and, like a mad dog, he has thrown himself upon all the most distinguished authors. Theologians, philosophers, poets, all the learned, have been the objects of his contempt, raillery, and banter. He has turned into ridicule religions, nations, and governments. There is no one who does not know this; and why should I not unmask the persecutor of the human race, this enemy of the living and the dead, and tear from him that assumption of infallibility in literature with which he arrogantly decorates himself?"

The "young advocate" was also the defender of an outraged individual. The Abbé Desfontaines, he remarks, is of an age and character that cause him to forgive injuries too easily, and therefore he, the young advocate, his friend, has undertaken to punish a man who has been accustomed to be paid for his follies *in another way*.

"Supposing, even, that the Abbé Desfontaines *is* such a person as he is depicted in 'Le Préservatif;' does it follow that Voltaire is an honest man and a great writer? Will all connoisseurs be the less convinced that he is absolutely ignorant of the dramatic art, and that he owes all the applause he has ever received at the theatre to the empty harmony of his pompous tirades, and to his satiric or irreligious audacity? His 'Henriade,' will it be the less a dazzling chaos, a bad tissue of fictions, stale or out of place, in which there is as much prose as verse, and more verbal faults than pages? Will not his 'Charles XII.' always pass for the work of an ignorant fool, written in the jocular taste of a common gossip retailing anecdotes? His Letters

(English), wherein he dares to carry his extravagances even to the altar, will they the less oblige him to keep out of Paris all his life? The 'Elements of Newton,' will they ever be anything else than the exercise of a school-boy who stumbles at every step, a work simply ridiculous? In a word, will Voltaire be the less a man dishonored in civilized society for his low impostures, his rascalities, his shameful basenesses, his thefts, public and private, and his presuming impertinence, which have drawn upon him hitherto such withering disgraces?"

Of these withering disgraces the young advocate appends a descriptive catalogue: "(1.) The deserved chastisement which he received at Sèvres during the regency, — a chastisement for which he deemed himself well recompensed by the thousand crowns which his avarice accepted to console his honor. (2.) The celebrated treatment at the door of the Hôtel de Sully, in consequence of which he was driven from France for the follies which that noble basting caused him to commit. (3.) Basting again at London from the hand of an English bookseller, — a grievous mishap, which made him earnestly solicit, and obtain, the favor of returning to France. Thus the same scourge that caused him to leave France made him come back, to experience several other affronts of another kind. When will he be satiated with ignominy?"

Then he came to the affair of the abbé's committal to Bicêtre: —

"Will it be believed that he who to-day brings against the Abbé Desfontaines so shameful a reproach is the self-same man who, thirteen or fourteen years ago, defended him against it, and who proved in a short memorial, drawn up by himself, the falsity and absurdity of the accusation? He did this at the solicitation of the late Président de Bernières, who good-naturedly lodged him in his house, and whom Voltaire presumed to call his friend! The Président de Bernières the *friend* of Voltaire, grandson of a peasant! The profession of man of letters is advantageous indeed. This *friend* drove him out of his house in 1726, after his insolent speech in Madame Lecouvreur's box."

He repeats that the service rendered him by Voltaire in 1724 was done in mere deference to the wishes of "a benefactor upon whom Voltaire depended," who "lodged and fed him," and who was an "ally of the Abbé Desfontaines."

He added, in a parenthesis, "A scoundrel, by his airs of protection, compels us to speak of this circumstance." He asks whether a man standing in such a relation to the *Président de Bernières* could have avoided doing as *Voltaire* had done.

This was the more audacious from the circumstance that *Madame de Bernières* was still alive. But *Desfontaines's* masterpiece of effrontery was in his meeting the charge of having written a libel against his deliverer just after leaving *Bicêtre*, which libel *Thieriot* had seen and had made him suppress. He attempted here to make a breach between the accuser and the witness.

"*M. Thieriot*," continued the young advocate, "is a man as much esteemed by worthy people as *Voltaire* is detested by them. As if in spite of himself, he draws after him the disgraceful residue of an old tie which he has not yet had the resolution to break entirely. Now *M. Thieriot*, who is cited as a witness in this affair, has been asked if the statement was true, and *M. Thieriot* has been obliged to say that he had no knowledge of it. Here we defy *Voltaire* to the proof. The sojourn at the country house of the late *Président de Bernières* occurred in the vacation of 1725. If a libel printed in that year exists, let it be produced. If it is replied that the abbé threw it into the fire, let *Voltaire* name the witnesses; for assuredly he ought not to be believed upon his word. He says that *M. Thieriot* obliged the abbé to throw it into the fire; and here is *M. Thieriot*, who declares the falsity of the statement. *Voltaire*, then, is the most audacious, the most insensate, of liars."

The pamphlet concluded by a kind of apology for its violence: "I believe the *Voltaire* mania sufficiently demonstrated by what I have said. Would to God that he was only a madman! Worse than that, he is false, impudent, slanderous. Let him henceforth write what he pleases, whether prose or verse, he has been deprived, or, rather, he has deprived himself, of the least credit in the world. For the rest, however he may seem to have been maltreated here, we have been but too indulgent. . . . And what is more likely to abase that monstrous pride of his, the radical cause of all his vices and all his infamy, than the contents of this salutary letter, which your charity will not fail to communicate to him?"

Having completed his pamphlet, the abbé was so well content with it that he read it, as an after-dinner treat, to a company of literary men at the house of the Marquis de Loc-Maria. The hearers pronounced it "a very gross libel;" upon which the author roared out "in the brutal tone that nature had given him, and which education had not corrected," "Voltaire has no other part to take than to go and hang himself."¹

The pamphlet was published December 14, 1738, and it had the swift currency which savage assaults upon conspicuous individuals usually have. Its sale was rapid and large. An edition of two thousand copies, printed in Holland, was sold in fifteen days, and the affair was soon the talk of Europe. Life, meanwhile, at the château of Cirey was going its usual train: Voltaire hard at work upon his new tragedy of "Mérope," of which he had the highest hopes; madame absorbed by turns in her lawsuit and her studies; the marquis, anticipating a successful result of the suit, in treaty for a new hôtel in Paris, price two hundred thousand francs. From various causes, Thieriot had been much in their thoughts of late. He had spent two or three weeks at the château in October of this year, and while he was there, Desfontaines being a topic at the dinner table, one day, he had told the Bicêtre anecdote,—how the abbé, fresh from prison, had written a libel against his benefactor. Madame was a little jealous of this comrade of Voltaire's youth, but she gave him a cordial reception and hospitable entertainment. On his departure, Voltaire, under pretense of assisting him to pack his valise, had slipped into it a *rouleau* of fifty golden louis, which Thieriot did not discover until he had reached Paris.

Madame du Châtelet received a copy of "La Voltairomanie" on Christmas Day, and read it with such feelings as we can imagine. "I have just read that frightful libel," she wrote to their "guardian angel," D'Argental. "I am in despair. I am more afraid of the sensitiveness of your friend than of the public; for I am persuaded that the cries of that mad dog can do no harm. I have kept it from him; his fever having only left him to-day. He fainted yesterday twice; he is extremely debilitated, and I should fear the worst if, in his present condition, his feelings should experience a violent shock. Upon

¹ Letter quoted in *Voltaire au Château de Cirey*, par Desnoiresterres, page 175.

such matters his sensitiveness is extreme. His Holland book-sellers, the return of Rousseau to Paris, and this libel are enough to kill him. There is no fraud which I do not invent to conceal from him news so afflicting." She continued to invent her amiable frauds during the whole holiday week; and, thinking that some reply to the pamphlet was necessary, she wrote one herself, which has been published among her works in recent times.

But Voltaire had had the pamphlet all the time, and had employed similar frauds to hide it from her. She appears to have made this discovery on New Year's Day; when, to her great relief, he took the affair with perfect coolness, seeming only to be concerned for its effect upon *her* mind. He told her there was no occasion to make any formal reply to an attack so absurdly violent. Their proper course, he thought, was to treat it merely as a criminal libel, prepare refuting testimony, and apply to the law for redress. He had already begun proceedings; had already sent to the Abbé Moussinot to buy a copy of the pamphlet in the presence of two witnesses, and to file the preliminary papers. Madame de Bernières promptly gave her testimony that he had paid rent for his rooms at her house; and, fortunately, he was a man who "never cast receipts away," and even his contract with the late president was on file at his brother's office in Paris. As to the evidence of Thieriot, that could not fail to be forthcoming with equal promptitude. All the knowledge he had ever possessed of the Bicêtre libel was obtained from Thieriot's spontaneous communications, and he could not doubt the loyalty of an old comrade, who owed all his importance in the world to his connection with himself.

But Thieriot was silent! The "Voltaireomanie" had been circulating ten days, and still no word from Thieriot! All the inmates of the château were amazed and confounded. Voltaire was cut to the heart. He was aware that Desfontaines had felt his ground with Thieriot before publishing the pamphlet, for Thieriot himself had told him so, and Voltaire had advised him to make no terms with the abbé. "You are trying," he wrote, "to conciliate a monster whom you detest and fear. I have less prudence. I hate him; I despise him; I am not afraid of him; and I shall lose no opportunity to punish him. I

know how to hate, because I know how to love. His base ingratitude, the greatest of all the vices, has rendered me irreconcilable."

In this passage we have the simple explanation of Thieriot's silence. Like many better men than himself, and like many men worse than himself, he was afraid of the editorial pen; he dared not face the weekly abuse of a widely-circulated journal. It was this conduct of his old friend, and not Desfontaines's crude and lumbering abuse, that threw Voltaire into those convulsions of which Madame de Grafigny was a witness, in the early days of 1739. He wrote to Thieriot the most eloquent and affectionate letters, remonstrating, pleading, arguing. Madame du Châtelet wrote to him. The marquis, who was no letter writer, dispatched a long epistle to the cowardly parasite, urging him to do his duty. "The extreme friendship," he wrote, "which I have for M. de Voltaire, and the knowledge which I possess of his friendship for you, and the essential proofs of it which he has given you, induce me to write to persuade you to do what you owe to friendship and to truth." The Prince Royal of Prussia was enlisted in the cause, Thieriot being his literary correspondent and Paris express agent.

Thieriot struggled hard to escape this dilemma. He wrote thus to Madame du Châtelet with regard to the Bicêtre libel: "I have been much questioned concerning the truth of that statement, and this has been my answer: that I simply remembered the fact, but that, with regard to the circumstances, they had so little remained in my memory that I could render no account of them; and that is not extraordinary, after so many years. All the information, then, madame, which I can give you is that, in those times, at M. de Bernières's country-house, there was conversation concerning a piece against M. de Voltaire, which, to the best of my recollection, filled a copy-book of forty to fifty pages. The Abbé Desfontaines showed it to me, and I engaged him to suppress it. As to the date and title of that writing (circumstances very important in this case), I protest, on my honor, that I remember nothing of them."

This was terrible, and may well have thrown a too susceptible friend into something like convulsions. Voltaire searched among his letters of that time, and found three or four of Thieriot's in which he had written of the libel. August 16,

1726, he had written thus: "Desfontaines in the time of his imprisonment [*dans le temps de Bicêtre*] wrote against you a satirical work, which I made him throw into the fire." In conversation he had mentioned the title of the piece, "Apologie du Sieur de Voltaire," which was not thrown into the fire, for it has since been printed, and is now accessible. Never was such pressure brought to bear upon a reluctant witness as upon Thieriot during the first weeks of the year 1739. The "stout lady," Madame de Champbonin, made a journey to Paris to add the weight of her personal influence. He made some concessions, at length, and joined the friends and family of Voltaire in demanding justice against the libeler.

It was customary then, it appears, for the friends and relations of a man bringing a libel suit to go in a body before the magistrate when the complaint was presented. The reader need scarcely be informed that Voltaire neglected no means to enforce his demand.

"Fly, my dear friend," he writes to Moussinot; "give the inclosed letter to my nephew. . . . I entreat him to stir up some of my relations. Join yourself to them and to Madame de Champbonin. Do your part: move the Procopes, the Andris, and even the indolent Pitaval, the Abbé Seran de La Tours, the Du Perrons de Castera; make them sign a new requisition. Offer them carriages, and, with your ordinary address and tact, pay all the expenses. Add De Mouhi to the crowd; promise him some money, but do not give him any. You must, my dear friend, call yourself my relation, as Madame de Champbonin does. All of you go in a body to the audience with the chancellor. Nothing produces so great an effect upon the mind of a judge well disposed as the attendance of a numerous family. . . . Spare neither money nor promises; it is necessary to rouse men, to excite them powerfully, in order to make them do right. I think it essential that my friend Thieriot should join my relations and defenders. . . . Let us neglect nothing; let us push the scoundrel by all the means in our power. . . . Justice is like the kingdom of heaven, and the violent take it by force."

Nor did he neglect to circulate in Paris satirical reflections upon his antagonist and the odious offense charged against him, which no Frenchman of that day, nor Frenchwoman either,

could resist. One anonymous letter, written at Cirey, desecrated upon Desfontaines's memorial in a strain like this: "He calls himself a man of quality, because he has a brother who is auditor of accounts at Rouen. He entitles himself a man of good morals, because he has been only a few days at the Châtelet and Bicêtre. He says that he goes always with a lackey; but he does not specify whether this bold lackey goes before or behind; and this is not a case to pretend that it is no matter which. Finally, he pushes his effrontery so far as to say that he has some friends. This is to attack cruelly the human race." There were several pages of this letter, in mingled prose and verse, each sentence a distinct and cutting epigram.

The friends of Voltaire rallied in great force, and displayed extraordinary zeal. Besides Madame de Champbonin, the Marquis du Châtelet came to Paris on this business, and lent the weight of his ancient name to the support of the person who occupied his place at home. The Prince Royal of Prussia wrote to the French ambassador at his father's court, asking him to make known to the Cardinal de Fleury his warm interest in Voltaire's cause.¹ Desfontaines discovered, before the spring months were over, that his antagonist had struck down too many roots in his native soil to be overthrown by one rude, unskillful blow. Voltaire tired out friend and foe, magistrates and ministers. His letters of these three or four months are wonderful for their number, length, intensity, acuteness, and fertility of suggestion. It must have seemed to all the parties and to the public that never again could there be peace in Europe until that indefatigable and indomitable spirit at the château of Cirey was appeased. Desfontaines was finally notified that he had only the choice to retract or go to prison again. Voltaire had always disavowed "*Le Préservatif*;" he must disavow "*La Voltairomanie*." The Marquis d'Argenson, on the part of the administration of justice, prepared the draft of such a disavowal and retraction as was required, which the abbé copied and signed:—

"I declare that I am not the author of a printed libel entitled "*La Voltairomanie*," and that I disavow it in its entirety, regarding as calumnious all the charges brought against M. de Voltaire in that libel; and that I should have consid-

¹ Frederic to Voltaire, 1739.

ered myself dishonored if I had had the least share in that writing, having for him all the sentiments of esteem due to his talents, and which the public so justly accords him. Done at Paris, this 4th April, 1739."

Voltaire was not satisfied, but gradually yielded to the entreaties of his friends to molest the abbé no more. Three weeks after, he wrote to his faithful Moussinot: "Let us speak no more of Desfontaines; I am ill avenged, but I *am* avenged. Give two hundred francs to Madame de Champbonin, and that with the best grace in the world; another hundred to De Mouhi, telling him you have no more." With surprising facility, he half forgave Thieriot, repeating one of his favorite maxims: "When two old friends separate, it is discreditable to both." He knew his man, and, perhaps, also suspected that the *date* of the Bicêtre libel was such as Desfontaines claimed; that is, before Voltaire had rendered him the service. What is most surprising in this affair is the little regard for truth shown by every individual involved in it. They all lied, like ill-taught children,—not only the antagonists, but all their friends; and the final disavowal was known to be a falsehood by the honorable magistrate who drew it, as well as by the odious individual who signed it.

Desfontaines continued his editorial career, and occasionally had a safe opportunity to indulge his rancor against Voltaire. The *Essays upon Fire*, written at Cirey, were soon after published. He criticised Voltaire's with severity, and extolled Madame du Châtelet's to the skies. Her dissertation, he said, was "full of spirit and erudition, of things curious and pleasing." She was "a phenomenon of literature, knowledge, and grace;" and "if any one was capable of giving France a complete course of natural philosophy, it was the illustrious lady whose genius and learning the Academy of Sciences had esteemed."¹

¹ 2 *L'Esprit de l'Abbé Desfontaines*, 201.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

FREDERIC BECOMES KING OF PRUSSIA.

VOLTAIRE came out of this contest a victor, but sorely wounded in body and mind; "his health," as Madame du Châtelet wrote in April, 1739, was "in a state so deplorable that I have no longer any hope of restoring it except through the bustle of a journey and a change of air. It is sad to be reduced to such a condition by a Desfontaines." An occasion for a long journey occurred that spring. Through the death of the aged Marquis de Trichâteau, cousin of M. du Châtelet, there was not only an increase of the family estate, but an additional hold upon that lawsuit of eighty years' standing, which was so frequent a topic at the château. The new acquisitions of land lay in Flanders, a few miles from Brussels, and the suit had to be tried in the courts of "the empire," to which Flanders then belonged. The Prince Royal of Prussia, too, while warning madame of the interminable delays of the Austrian judges, had promised to do what he could to accelerate her cause. "They say," he wrote in January, 1739, "that if the imperial court owes a box on the ear to some one it is necessary to solicit three years before getting payment." But Frederic knew intimately the Prince of Orange and the Prince d'AreMBERG, all powerful in the Low Countries, and through them he hoped to quicken the pace of the cause through the courts.

On the 8th of May, 1739, the Marquis du Châtelet, Madame la Marquise, Koenig, her new tutor in mathematics, Voltaire, and a numerous retinue of servants left the château at Cirey for a very leisurely journey to Brussels, a hundred and fifty miles distant, which they accomplished in twenty days. Voltaire had lived three successive years at Cirey. A long period was to elapse before he again remained three years under one roof; for his connection with this family, so far from

affording him the peace and quiet he needed, only added their perplexities and excitements to his own, which were numerous enough without that large addition. He was an appendage who should have been chief. This lawsuit was his lawsuit, as his affair with Desfontaines had been theirs also. Upon reaching Brussels, they rode out together to see the new estate. Returning soon, madame, head of the family, hired a large furnished house in a secluded quarter of Brussels, and the whole party settled to their several occupations: she to law papers, German, and mathematics, rising at six to study, dreading to disgust Professor Koenig with her inaptitude; the marquis, who was soon to depart, to the calm digestion of his daily rations; Voltaire to his new tragedies and his "Louis XIV.," not declining his share of the law business. Madame was resolved to win her suit. She studied every document, law precedent, and usage bearing upon it, and had that entire confidence in the justice of her cause which is the aggravating privilege of clients.

But these were not people to give themselves wholly up to labor. Brussels had been for many years the abode of J. B. Rousseau; the Duke d'Arenberg having given the exiled poet honorable asylum, for which the duke is now chiefly remembered. Later, he withdrew his favor from Rousseau, and the poet lived in obscurity in a city where the arts were held in little esteem. Voltaire, still burning with wrath against him, desired to show the people of Brussels that he was still a personage, in spite of the devout libels of Rousseau and the lumbering assaults of Desfontaines. He was willing, also, to let them know that a French poet was not of necessity dependent on a prince's bounty. He gave a *fête*, in the style of a "garden party," to Madame du Châtelet, the Princess of Chimai, and the Duke d'Arenberg, to which he invited the society of Brussels. The invitations were given in the name of the "Envoy from Utopia," though he confesses he had never read Sir Thomas More's work upon that island, and discovered that not one person in all Brussels had ever heard of it, or knew what the word Utopia meant. The party was perfectly successful, and made the house a social centre to the world of Brussels. A deplorable incident, however, rendered the occasion one of misery to himself. In the morning, as he was su-

perintending the preparations for the fireworks, two of his carpenters fell from the height of the third story at his feet, and covered him with their blood. He almost lost consciousness, and was some days in recovering from the shock.

The Duke d'Areberg invited the strangers, in return, to his castle at Enghien twenty miles away, where Rousseau had lived. There Madame du Châtelet and himself spent a week or two, joining in the noble game of killing time, the chief employment then of princes. "I play a good deal at *brelan*," he wrote to Helvetius, "but our dear studies lose nothing by it. It is necessary to ally labor and pleasure." He found Flanders very much what Charlotte Brontë found it a hundred years later: "It is not the land of *belles-lettres*. . . . I am in a château wherein there were never any books except those brought by Madame du Châtelet and myself; but, by way of compensation, there are gardens more beautiful than those of Chantilly, and we lead here that luxurious and easy life which makes the country so agreeable. The possessor of this beautiful retreat is of more value than many books;" particularly, he might have added, to an author gathering historic material; for the Duke d'Areberg had been wounded at Malplaquet, had served under Prince Eugene, had been part of all the military history of his time. These superb gardens exist at the present day, and the château itself has been demolished only a few years. Visitors are shown a Mount Parnassus there, upon which Voltaire and Rousseau may have stood, as well as some walks shaded by ancient, interlaced shrubbery, under which they must often have walked, though not together. After a round of splendid festivity at Enghien, to which the visitors added the intellectual element of comedy, they returned to Brussels.

But there was no resting-place there for a poet. The business of the suit obliged madame, six weeks later, to go and pass a month in Paris, where also Voltaire had business, two tragedies at once being ready for submission to the actors. In September they were in the metropolis. Paris was in festival, for the king's eldest daughter was just married to the Prince Royal of Spain, and the king was lavishing millions in tasteless magnificences, which, Voltaire thought, would have been better employed in permanent improvements.

“Paris [as he wrote to “the stout lady” of Cirey, Madame de Champonin, — “big tom-cat,” as he loved to call her] is an abyss, wherein we lose our repose and serenity of mind, without which life is a wearisome tumult. I do not live; I am carried, drawn far from myself in whirlwinds. I go, I come; I sup at the end of the city, to sup the next day at the other end. From a society of three or four intimate friends, I must fly to the opera, to the theatre, to see some curiosities as a stranger, to embrace a hundred persons in a day, to make and receive a hundred protestations; not a moment to myself; no time to write, think, or sleep. I am like that personage of old who died smothered under the flowers that were thrown to him. . . . Such is our life, my dear *gros chat*; and you, tranquil on your roof, laugh at our escapades; and, for myself, I regret those moments so full of delight which we enjoyed at Cirey, with our friends and one another. What is, then, that bundle of books which has reached Cirey? Is it a packet of works against me? I will mention to you, in passing, that there is no more question here of the Desfontaines horrors than if he and his monsters of children had never existed. That wretch can no more thrust himself into good company at Paris than Rousseau can at Brussels. They are spiders, which are not found in well-kept houses. My dear *gros chat*, I kiss a thousand times your velvet paws.”

This mode of existence, which did not prevent Madame du Châtelet from continuing her studies, was fatal to the production of dramatic poetry, which required, as Voltaire wrote to Mademoiselle Quinault, “the whole soul of the poet, a serenity the most profound, an enthusiasm the most intense, a patience the most docile.” In November, without having seen either of his new plays in rehearsal, he set out with madame on his return, taking Cirey on their way, and before Christmas they were settled once more in Brussels, immersed in law, mathematics, and literature.

The new year, 1740, was one of the most interesting of Voltaire's life. The King of Prussia was fast failing, and the Prince Royal, his heir, was giving to Voltaire and to Europe the most engaging promise of a reign peaceful and noble beyond example. Never before had their correspondence been so frequent, so tender, so enthusiastic. The prince had set his heart upon editing and publishing the most superb edition of “La Henriade” that art and expense could produce. He meant to have the poem printed from engraved plates, as music was then printed, and he was in correspondence on the

subject with persons in England, where the work was to be done. Finding unexpected difficulties in the way, he imported from England a font of silver-faced type, and set all the artists and engravers of Berlin at work executing vignettes and other illustrations. "Whatever the cost," he wrote to the author, "we shall produce a masterpiece worthy of the poem which it will present to the public." Frederic composed an elaborate introduction, in which he extolled the poem in a manner so extravagant that the poet begged him to moderate his eulogium. The prince denied him this favor, and the introduction, as we now have it in the royal edition of Frederic's works, ranks "La Henriade" above the "Æneid," above the "Iliad," and, indeed, above all that man had produced of excellent and finished in epic poetry.¹

Aside from this excess of praise, the preface was well calculated to strengthen Voltaire's position in France. Frederic, writing while the affair of Desfontaines was fresh in the public mind, hurls anathemas at those "half-learned men, those creatures amphibious of erudition and ignorance, those wretches, themselves without talent, who persistently persecute men whose brilliant genius throws them into eclipse;" and he endeavors to show France how unworthy it was of her to menace and maltreat a man who was the wonder and glory of his age and country. The prince quotes but three lines from the poem, — the apostrophe to Friendship in the eighth canto, in which kings are spoken of as "illustrious ingrates, who are so unhappy as not to know friendship." Frederic did not "stand by his order."

Voltaire, never weary of correcting his works, sent the prince a number of passages for insertion in the new edition, one or two of which had in them so much of the Bastille flavor that Frederic advised him not to print them in any French edition of the poem: "My dear Voltaire, avoid giving a pretext to the race of bigots, and fear your persecutors. There is nothing more cruel than to be suspected of irreligion. In vain one makes all imaginable efforts to escape the odium of it; the accusation lasts always. I speak from experience; and I perceive that extreme circumspection is necessary upon a matter of which dotards [*sots*] make a principal point."

¹ 8 Œuvres de Frédéric le Grand, 49, 51. Berlin, 1847.

Voltaire, in the course of his life, was favored with many reams of advice of this kind. Frederic often joined Madame du Châtelet in the well-meant endeavor to "save him from himself," — which would have been to annihilate himself. The passage which the prince had in his mind when he wrote thus remains in the poem (canto vii. line 56): "Soft Hypocrisy, with eyes full of sweetness, — heaven in her eyes, hell in her heart," — ending with the lines in which the church is represented as having inspired and hallowed assassination in the religious wars: "In Paris, cruel priests dared to soil the holy altars with the portrait of Valois's assassin. The League invoked him; Rome extolled him; here in torments hell disavows him." Such a passage, the prince added, was fit to be published only in a country like England, where "it is permitted to a man not to be stupid, and to utter all his thought."

The zeal of the prince in producing this sumptuous edition was indefatigable. He had a world of trouble with it, as men usually have who meddle with other trades than their own; but he was sustained by a heart-felt conviction that the delineation given in the poem of the religious wars — "the baleful work of wicked priests and false zeal" — was a lesson to kings and people of unspeakable value, which could not be too often repeated nor too strongly emphasized. "An idle prince, in my opinion," he wrote, "is an animal of little use to the world. At least it is my desire to serve my age in all that depends upon me. I wish to contribute to the immortality of a work useful to the universe; I wish to spread abroad a poem in which the author teaches the duty of nobles and the duty of peoples, a mode of reigning little known among princes, and a way of thinking that would have ennobled the gods of Homer."

Under the inspiration of Voltaire, he even determined to become himself an author. At this time, the last year of his liberty and leisure, he wrote his "Anti-Machiavelli," or critical examination of Machiavelli's "Prince," a work which he regarded as one of the most mischievous that had ever appeared. He told Voltaire that he meant his treatise as "a sequel to 'La Henriade.'" "Upon the grand sentiments of Henry IV. I forge the thunder-bolts that will crush Cæsar

Borgia," he wrote in his first enthusiasm; and the work continued for many months to be a leading topic in their correspondence. The "Anti-Machiavelli" is a dissertation in twenty-six chapters, wherein the maxims by which Machiavelli inculcates the art of despotism are demolished in the best manner of a young man whose virtue has not yet been brought to "the fatal touch-stone" of opportunity. Voltaire might well anticipate, as he read the chapters sent him by the prince, that Europe was about to see a powerful and rising state governed on Arcadian principles. How eloquently did the prince descant upon the barbarous kings who preferred "the fatal glory of conquerors to that won by kindness, justice, clemency, and all the virtues!" He wondered — he who was to invade and annex Silesia within the year — "what could induce a man to aggrandize himself through the misery and destruction of other men." "How monstrous, how *absurd*, the attempt to render one's self illustrious through making others miserable!" "The new conquests of a sovereign do not render the states more opulent which he already possesses; his subjects gain nothing; and he deludes himself if he imagines he will be more happy." Again: "It is not the magnitude of the country a prince governs which constitutes his glory."¹ Twenty-six chapters of such virtue-in-words, so easy, so delusive, make up the "Anti-Machiavelli" of Frederic of Prussia. Those words were evidently sincere. They were as sincere as the eloquent composition of a student upon temperance, which he delivers to admiration at eleven A. M., and who is led home at eleven P. M. of the same day, something the worse for his supper.

It is given to Frenchmen, as to ladies, to shed tears easily. These noble sentiments, uttered by a young man who was about to ascend a throne and command an army of a hundred thousand men, brought rapturous tears to Voltaire's eyes, and he delighted to call the prince the modern Marcus Aurelius and the Solomon of the North. He did more. He pointed out the faults and defects of the work with considerable frankness, wrote a preface for it, and undertook the charge of getting it printed and published.

There is nothing in the lives of these two kings so amiable

¹ 9 Œuvres Frédéric le Grand, 69, 70.

and pleasing as this early romantic phase of their long friendship, before either had seen anything of the other but his most real self — the man as he would have been if his strength had been equal to his disposition, or if he had been born in a much less difficult world than the one he actually inhabited. Thé prince's daily thought was to gratify and glorify a beloved Master, who gave his pupil an ample return of such wit and wisdom as he possessed. Frederic consulted his own physician upon Voltaire's case; sent him medicines and receipts; sent him casks of Hungarian wine, then much valued for weak stomachs; and gave him a ring that he was never, *never*, to take from his finger. He also supplied Madame du Châtelet with an abundance of amber articles, addressed to her a long poem, wrote her many letters, and claimed a place in the poet's heart *next* to hers.

He made known to Voltaire some of his royal dreams of good for Prussia: "Every chief of society," he wrote, a few months before his accession, "ought, it seems to me, to think seriously of rendering his people contented, if he cannot make them rich; for contentment can very well subsist without being sustained by wealth." To this end, he thought, kings should provide agreeable and cheering entertainments for their people; enjoying which, they could for a short time forget the unhappinesses of their lot. He told Voltaire that if the affairs of the world were really governed by an all-wise Providence, as people imagined, the kings of Europe would not be the extremely dull men many of them were. "The Newtons, the Wolfs, the Lockes, the Voltaires, would be the masters of this world." He described the tower he had built at his châteaueau, in imitation of Voltaire's hall at Cirey: the first story a grotto; the second a room for philosophical apparatus; the third a printing-office; the roof an observatory. A colonnade connected this structure with the wing of the castle in which his library was placed; and, thus bountifully provided, he passed his days in study, experiment, music, and composition; punctual at the daily parade of his regiment, not otherwise taking part in public business.

He was, as heirs-apparent generally were, the darling of his country; his portrait in every house, his name a household word. The few old heads who supposed they had Europe

in charge, at that period of personal government, regarded this young prince with some attention and little respect. His air-pumps, his tower, his verses, his flute, his raving enthusiasm for a French author, even his aversion to debauchery, all conspired to give them the impression that he and Prussia would be an easy prey. His regiment, however, was a model to the whole army; even his martinet of a father commended it.

In February, 1740, the king was supposed to be dying, and the *Princé Royal* was of necessity near his bedside. Frederic-William was only fifty-two years of age, and he had inherited a constitution that should have lasted eighty-five. Wine, tobacco, arbitrary power, and the infuriate temper resulting from their inordinate use had burned him out at this early period, and he was one mass of incurable disease. It is an evidence of the essential soundness of the prince's character, as well as of his discernment, that in all his correspondence and conversation he was loyal to this dull, defective parent, whom a physical cause maddened and destroyed. He gave Voltaire a glowing narrative of the great things his father had done in peopling a province devastated by the plague, and he never dropped an allusion to the terrible scenes in the palace and the prison which had embittered his own early years, and the whole life of his sister of Baireuth.

The king lingered nearly half a year, during which his son was severed from all that had made life interesting to him, and he was prevented by etiquette from engaging in new employments. He could merely wait, and stay at home, and look serious. In such circumstances, the only vent to his pent-up vivacity was in composing French verses; and this was his usual resource all his life, even in the crisis of a campaign, or while he was waiting for the development of a manœuvre. "As I cannot drink," he wrote once from the field to his sister Amelia, "nothing relieves me but writing verses, and while the distraction lasts I do not feel my griefs." So, now, at Berlin, waiting till his father's death should call him to new duties, he relieved his mind by writing long letters to Voltaire, in mingled verse and prose. Thus, February 26, 1740:—

"My dear Voltaire, I can reply only in two words to the

letter, the most *spirituelle* in the world, which you wrote to me. The situation in which I find myself holds the mind so strongly that I almost lose the faculty of thinking.

“Oui, j'apprends, en devenant maître,
Le fragilité de mon être ;
Recevant les grandeurs, j'en vois la vanité.”¹

There were twenty-nine lines of this poem, in some of which he came as near poetry as he ever did in his life. He said, in plain prose, that, in whatever situation destiny might place him, Voltaire should see no other change in him than something more efficacious added to the esteem and friendship which he felt for him, and always should feel. “I think,” he added, “a thousand times of the place in ‘La Henriade’ where the courtiers of Valois are spoken of. ‘*His courtiers in tears about him ranged.*’”

Many long letters in this manner followed, the prince often deploring his coming elevation, as well he might, and declaring that nothing consoled him but “the thought of serving his fellow-citizens [*concitoyens*], and being useful to his country.” He hoped, too, to possess Voltaire. “Can I hope to see you, or do you wish cruelly to deprive me of that satisfaction? . . . If I change my condition, you will be informed of it among the first. Pity me, for I assure you I am to be pitied.”

Frederic-William died May 31, 1740. For a week the young king was immersed in business that could not be deferred. A monarch was to be buried; Prussia was to be delivered from the ridicule of his four thousand rickety giants; and tangled skeins of negotiation were to be unraveled. At the end of his first week of royalty he found time to write to Voltaire a short letter, which showed how little even an absolute monarch is master of his time and destiny. Frederic had thought to be king of Prussia, but was already discovering that Prussia was going to be king of Frederic.

“My dear friend [he wrote June 6, 1740], my destiny is changed, and I have witnessed the last moments of a king, his death-struggle, and his death. In coming to royalty, I certainly had no need of this lesson to be disgusted with the vanity of human grandeurs. I had projected a little work of a metaphysical nature; it is changed into

¹ Yes, I apprehend on becoming master the frailty of my being; receiving grandeurs, I see the vanity of them.

a work of politics. I thought to joust with the amiable Voltaire, and am obliged to fence with the old mitred Machiavelli.¹ In a word, my dear Voltaire, we are not masters of our destiny. The tornado of events draws us along, and we have to let ourselves be drawn. See in me, I pray you, only a zealous citizen, a somewhat skeptical philosopher, but a truly faithful friend. For God's sake, write to me only as man to man, and despise with me titles, names, and all external show. I have scarcely yet had time to recognize myself; my occupations are infinite, and still I give myself more of them; but, despite all this labor, there always remains to me time to admire your works, and draw from them instruction and recreation. Assure the marchioness of my esteem. I admire her as much as her vast information and rare capacity merit. Adieu, my dear Voltaire. If I live, I shall see you, and even this very year. Love me always, and be always sincere with your friend."

Three letters the young king wrote to Voltaire in the first month of his reign, in verse and prose, although, as he said, he had to work with both hands, — with one at army business, with the other at civil affairs and the fine arts; having twenty occupations at once, and finding every day twenty-four hours too short. Voltaire was not backward in responding.

"Sire," he wrote in his first letter to the king, "if your destiny has changed, your noble soul has not. I was a little inclined to misanthropy, and the injustice of men afflicted me too much. At present I abandon myself, with all the world, to joy." Then he told the king what delight his accession had given in France. "The French are all Prussians. . . . The minister who governs the country where I am (Count de Daun, of Brussels) said to me, 'We shall see if he will disband all at once the useless giants who have caused so much outcry.' My reply was, 'He will do nothing precipitately; he will not betray any marked design to condemn the errors which his predecessor may have made; he will content himself with repairing them gradually. Deign, then, to avow, great king, that I have divined well. Your majesty orders me, when writing to you, to think less of the monarch than of the *man*. It is an order much in accord with my own heart. I do not know how to demean myself with a king;

¹ Cardinal de Fleury.

but I am quite at my ease with a true man, — one who has in his heart and his head the love of the human race. There is one thing which I should never dare ask the king, but which I should dare take the liberty of asking the man. It is, if the late king, before his death, came to know and love all the merit of my adorable prince.”

He banters the king upon the question whether he would submit to the ceremony of coronation and anointing; asks him for the routine of his day; warns him to put a festive supper between the day's work and sleep; declares that he is enraptured at the thought of seeing him so soon; and protests that the sight of him will be a beatific vision. “I am not the only one who sighs for that happiness. The Queen of Sheba would like to take measures for seeing Solomon in his glory.”

Solomon wrote a long reply, touching upon many points, but did not offer the least encouragement to the project of the Queen of Sheba. It was not his intention to invite a Queen of Sheba, from whom he hoped to lure an illustrious vassal. He informed Voltaire that his father had died in perfect friendship with him.

“Here, then, is the Berlin Gazette, such as you ask it of me: I reached Potsdam Friday evening, and found the king in so sad a condition that I augured at once that his end was near. He showed me a thousand marks of his regard; he talked to me more than a full hour upon public business, both home and foreign, with all the justness and good sense imaginable. Saturday, Sunday, and Monday he spoke in the same way, appearing very tranquil, very resigned, and bearing his pains with much firmness. He resigned the regency into my hands Tuesday morning at five o'clock; took leave tenderly of my brothers, of all the officers of mark, and of me.”

Frederic continued at much length to answer Voltaire's questions. One piece of intelligence must have struck with surprise a man who was reading the proofs of Frederic's “Anti-Machiavelli:” “I began by augmenting the forces of the state by sixteen battalions, five companies of hussars, and one of body guards.” But then he immediately added that he had founded a new Academy, had made the acquisition of Maupertuis, Wolf, and Algarotti, had invited to his service Euler, S'Gravesend, and Vaucanson, had established a new col-

lege for commerce and manufactures, had engaged painters and sculptors, and was *not* going to be either crowned or anointed. He spoke of those ceremonies as "frivolous and useless, which ignorance and superstition had established." He was working, too, with wonderful assiduity: up at four; medical treatment till eight; at his desk till ten; parade till noon; at desk again till five; in the evening, music, supper, and society.

Voltaire was moved, amazed, and puzzled. "What do you think of it?" he asked his old friend Cideville. "Is not your heart moved? Are we not happy to be born in an age which has produced a man so singular? For all that, I remain in Brussels, and the best king in the world, with all his merits and favors, shall not take me away a moment from Emilie. Kings, even this one, must ever yield the precedence to friends."

Emilie, indeed, had a tight clutch upon him. Her obliging husband had now gone to the army, and never lived long under the same roof with her again. There was a period of five years, from 1740 to 1745, during which they scarcely met, though they were always on terms of friendship, and cordially coöperated for objects of common concern. Voltaire was husband, companion, lawyer, and illustrious friend to her, all in one; and she held him fast by making him believe that his presence was infinitely necessary to her. He had, moreover, vowed eternal fidelity, and he was a man to be faithful to such a vow. Planting herself upon this vow, as some women do upon their marriage certificate, she kept him in pitiful bondage through his sympathies, and of course dared not trust him out of her sight. The vigilant instinct with which women falsely allied to men are apt to be endowed causes them to scent danger from afar, and thus Madame du Châtelet, from the first, dreaded in the Prince Royal of Prussia a rival that could rob her of her poet. For the next ten years it was indeed always a question which should possess him; and between the two contestants Voltaire seemed sometimes in danger of being torn to pieces.

The struggle began in the first month of Frederic's reign. The refutation of Machiavelli was in the hands of a printer in Holland at the moment of Frederic's accession to the throne;

and Voltaire, the editor of the work, so informed the king. But Prussia was now lord of Frederic. Surveying his amiable treatise from the height of a throne, he perceived several things in it that were proper enough for a prince to write, but not politic for a king to publish. "For God's sake," he wrote to Voltaire, "buy up the whole edition of the 'Anti-Machiavelli!'"¹ Here was a coil. The publisher lived at the Hague a hundred miles away, and he was a publisher who knew how much the commercial value of the work confided to him by Voltaire had increased by its author's accession to a throne. It was evidently necessary for the editor to go to the Hague. He went. Experienced men will know what he meant when he told the king that he "had had much trouble in getting leave of absence."

Rare scenes occurred at the Hague between editor and publisher, which could have been amplified into an amusing farce. Voltaire had sent a man in advance, post-haste, to try and get possession, on some plausible pretext, of a few pages of the manuscript not yet in type, so that he could enter upon the negotiation at an advantage. Not a page could be beguiled from the astute possessor of the prize. Upon hearing this report, Voltaire himself entered upon the scene.

"I sent for the rascal; I sounded him; I presented the thing in every light. He gave me to understand that, being in possession of the manuscript, he would not for any consideration whatever give it up; and that, having begun to print, he should finish. When I saw that I had dealings with a Dutchman who abused the liberty of his country, and with a publisher who pushed to excess his right of persecuting authors, not being able here to confide my secret to any one, nor to implore the aid of authority, I remembered that your majesty says, in one of the chapters of the 'Anti-Machiavelli,' that in negotiation it is allowable to use a little honest *finesse*. I said then to Jean Van Duren that I only came to correct some pages of the manuscript. 'Very willingly, sir,' said he. 'If you will come to my house, I will confide it to you generously, leaf by leaf; you shall correct whatever you please, shut up in my room, in the presence of my family and my workmen.' I accepted his cordial offer; I went to his house; and, in truth, I corrected some leaves, which he took from me as I did them, and read them over to see if I was not deceiving him. Having thus inspired in him a little less distrust, I returned

¹ 22 Œuvres de Frédéric le Grand, 14.

to-day to the same prison, where he shut me up as before ; and having obtained six chapters at once, in order to compare them together, I scratched them in such a way, and interlined such horrible cock-and-bull nonsense, that they no longer had the least resemblance to a work. That is what may be called blowing up your ship in order not to be taken by the enemy. I was in despair at sacrificing so fine a work ; but I was obeying a king whom I idolize, and I assure you I did it with hearty good-will. Who is now astonished and confounded ? My scoundrel. To-morrow I hope to make with him a fair bargain, and to force him to give up all to me, both print and manuscript."

But Jean was obdurate. Voltaire sought legal advice, and found that, by Dutch law, a bargain was a bargain. He tried all arts and devices, and still Van Duren's press continued to strike off the printed sheets. Then he advised the king to kill Van Duren's edition by issuing an authorized version, which he, Voltaire, would superintend, and hurry into print. The king replied, "Erase, alter, correct, and replace all the passages you like. I submit the whole to your discernment." Voltaire recast the work in a few days, and, in a few weeks, had editions for London, Paris, and Holland ready for distribution ; and thus, although he did not prevent Van Duren from issuing his mutilated version, he prevented him from gaining much by it. In the late Berlin edition of Frederic's works, two versions of the "Anti-Machiavelli" are given, — the one edited by Voltaire, and the one as originally written in the king's own hand. Voltaire used his privilege of editor with great freedom, and made many gallant cuts in the manuscript, erasing in all thirty-two printed pages. When the king saw his diminished bantling, his paternal pride was so aggrieved that he resolved to disavow both editions and spend the leisure of the following winter in preparing a third, which should be printed at Berlin under his own eyes, and, perhaps, published with his name in the title-page. Before the next winter had reached its second month, the King of Prussia, as it seemed to his assiduous editor, was refuting, sword in hand, not Machiavelli's "Prince," but the prince's "Anti-Machiavelli." For the present, the king was sorry he had written the book, because "it had robbed the world of fifteen days of Voltaire's time." Late in August, 1740, Voltaire returned to Brussels and resumed his usual routine of labor and recreation.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

FIRST MEETING OF VOLTAIRE AND FREDERIC.

KING and author, after four years of correspondence, were now to put their enthusiastic friendship to the test of personal converse. The king, in making the tour of his states to receive homage, was to approach, in September, 1740, the borders of Flanders. He was on fire to meet Voltaire. Rather than not see him, he would receive Madame du Châtelet also, though with great reluctance; and he wrote to her, at Voltaire's request, to say that he hoped soon to meet them both. He evidently had for her the repugnance of a rival. "To speak frankly to you," he wrote to Voltaire, "it is you, it is my friend, whom I desire to see; and the divine Emilie, with all her divinity, is only the accessory of the Newtonized Apollo." Writing the next day, the king added, "If Emilie *must* accompany Apollo, I consent; but if I can see you alone, I should prefer it. I should be too much dazzled; I could not bear so much brilliancy at once. I should need the veil of Moses to temper the blended rays of your divinities."

But, king as he was, he was obliged promptly to change his note; and he announced his intention, a few days after, of visiting them, *incognito*, at Brussels. They were to meet him at Anvers, a day's ride from their abode, and they would all go to Brussels together, — Voltaire and madame, the king and his three companions, Kaiserling, Maupertuis, and Algarotti. Nothing could be more agreeable to Madame du Châtelet; for Algarotti and Maupertuis were among her most cherished friends. Kaiserling had been her guest, and she was not insensible to the social *éclat* of entertaining a king. She had had a brief estrangement from the difficult Maupertuis, but Voltaire had healed the breach, telling the irritable philosopher that "a man is always in the right when he makes the first advance to an offended woman." Maupertuis, as it

seems, acted upon this maxim, and all was well between them. A most congenial party would have surrounded the king at her house in Brussels, where madame had extemporized ample preparation.

But there was, after all, a doubt whether the king could come. He was afflicted with the four-days ague, for which he was under treatment; and the next day, as he wrote to Voltaire, would decide whether that treatment had been effectual. If the next day passed without a fit of the ague, then he would go on from Wessel to Anvers, and meet them, and enjoy the most exquisite experience of his life.

But the ague returned the next day, and the king could only write a letter, not undertake a long journey. Could Voltaire alone meet him at Cleves, eighty miles from Brussels? "Let us cheat the fever, my dear Voltaire, and let me at least have the pleasure of embracing you. Make my excuses to the marchioness for my not having the satisfaction of seeing her at Brussels. All who come near me know what my intention was, and that it was the fever only that could have made me change it. On Sunday I shall be at a little place near Cleves, where I shall be able to possess you truly at my ease. If the sight of you does not cure me, I shall confess myself at once."

No French lady of that period could believe that this was not contrived; and we may also be perfectly sure that Madame du Châtelet did not allow royal letters to come into her house which she did not take the precaution of reading. We ought not to be surprised, therefore, to read in one of her letters of December, 1740, "I defy the King of Prussia to hate me more than I have hated him these two months past!" Nevertheless, Voltaire managed to break away, and take the road to Cleves in time for the rendezvous, carrying with him a letter from madame to the king, in which she declared she did not know which afflicted her most, — to know that he was sick, or to miss the expected opportunity of paying him her court. She also hoped his majesty would not keep long the person with whom she expected to pass her life, and whom she had "only lent him for a very few days."

On a chilly Sunday evening, September 11, 1740, Voltaire reached the castle of Moyland, six miles from Cleves, where

the King of Prussia lodged. At the gate of the court he found one soldier on guard, and descried within the court Privy Councilor Rambouet walking up and down, blowing his fingers. The visitor was conducted to the rooms of the château occupied by the king, which were unfurnished; and he perceived by the light of one candle, in a small side-room, a cot two feet and a half wide, upon which there was a little man all muffled up in a dressing-gown of thick blue cloth, and shaking with a violent fit of the ague. Voltaire, after making his bow, went to the bedside of the shivering monarch, and, as he tells us, "began their acquaintance by feeling his pulse, as if he had been the king's first physician." The fit passed, and the king was well enough to dress and join his friends at supper. With Voltaire, Maupertuis, Algarotti, Kaiserling, and one or two official persons at the table, Frederic forgot his ague, and led the conversation to deep and high matters. "We discussed to the bottom," Voltaire recorded long after, "the immortality of the soul, free-will, and the men-women of Plato." Doubtless it was a supper to be remembered.

The three days' visit was all too short for the discussion of the king's fondly cherished projects for the elevation of his country and the entertainment of its capital. Frederic availed himself of the pen of his guest in drawing up a manifesto, besides advising with him in affairs dramatic, philosophical, artistic, and literary. The king anticipated some years of peace, and with good reason. His whole soul seemed set upon employing those years in making Berlin a German Paris, with academy, library, theatre, opera, galleries, society, all in the true Parisian manner. What man so competent to aid him as Voltaire, who had lived but to promote and strengthen that which made Paris illustrious in Frederic's eyes? Three days of familiar, earnest, delicious conversation, three suppers of the gods, and the friends separated; but soon, as they hoped, to meet again, in circumstances more favorable,—perhaps at that château of Remusburg, where Frederic had lived as Prince Royal, and where he had built a tower and had gathered all the means of self-improvement. Voltaire, on leaving the château of Moyland, took the road to Holland, to complete the publication of the "Anti-Machievelli" and to superintend its

distribution. Thus, the King of Prussia did not send back in a few days the poet whom Madame du Châtelet had been so obliging as to lend him.

The visit did not, in the least, disenchant either the king or Voltaire. They were, if possible, more in love with each other than before.

“I have seen that Voltaire whom I was so curious to know,” wrote the king, September 24th, to his familiar Jordan; “but I saw him with my ague upon me, and my mind as unstrung as my body was weak. . . . He has the eloquence of Cicero, the sweetness of Pliny, and the wisdom of Agrippa; in a word, he unites in himself the virtues and talents of the three greatest men of antiquity. His mind works without ceasing; every drop of ink is a gleam of wit darted from his pen. He declaimed “Mahomet I.” to us, an admirable tragedy of his own, and he transported us out of ourselves; I could only admire and be silent. The Du Châtelet is fortunate indeed to have him; for out of the good things he utters at random a person who had no gift but memory might make a brilliant book.”

Voltaire was not less satisfied with the king. He described him soon after, in letters to Cideville, Maupertuis, Hénault, and D’Argens, in glowing terms.

[To Cideville.] “I saw one of the most amiable men in the world, — a man who would be the charm of society, sought everywhere, if he had not been a king; a philosopher without austerity, all goodness, compliance, and accomplishments; forgetting that he is a king the moment he is among his friends, and so completely forgetting it that he made me forget it also, so that I had to make an effort of memory to recollect that I saw seated upon the foot of my bed a sovereign who had an army of a hundred thousand men.”

[To D’Argens.] “Why do you go to Switzerland? What! there is a King of Prussia in the world! What! the most amiable of men is upon a throne! The Algarottis, the Wolfs, the Maupertuis, all the arts, are running thither in a throng, and you would go to Switzerland! No, no; take my advice: establish yourself at Berlin. Reason, wit, virtue, are to be recreated there. It is the country for every man who thinks. . . . To-day [at the Hague], I have seen a gentleman of fifty thousand francs a year, who said to me, ‘I shall have no other country than Berlin. I renounce my own.’ I know, too, a very great lord of the empire who desires to leave his sacred majesty for the *Humanity* of the King of Prussia. Go, my dear friend, into

that temple which he is elevating to the arts. Alas, that I cannot follow you thither! A sacred duty draws me elsewhere."

[To President Hénault.] "It is a miracle of nature that the son of a crowned ogre, reared with beasts, should have divined in his deserts that refinement and all those natural graces which, even at Paris, are the possession of a very small number of persons, who nevertheless make the reputation of Paris. His ruling passions are to be just and to please. He is formed for society as for the throne. . . . As much as I detest the low and infamous superstition which disgraces so many states, so much do I adore true virtue; and I believe I have found it in this prince and in his book. If he should ever betray such grand professions, if he is not worthy of himself, if he is not always a Marcus Aurelius, a Trojan, and a Titus, I shall lament it, and love him no more."

[To Maupertuis.] "When we set out from Cleves, and you took to the right and I to the left, I believed we had come to the last judgment, and the good Lord was separating his elect from the damned. The divine Frederic said to you, 'Sit at my right hand in the paradise of Berlin; and to me, 'Go, accursed one, into Holland.' I am, then, in that phlegmatic hell, far from the divine fire that animates the Frederics, the Maupertuis, the Algarottis."

He was detained several weeks at the Hague, during which he lived, by the king's invitation, at an old palace belonging to the crown of Prussia, and inhabited by the Prussian envoy. He gave the king a poetical description of the dilapidated condition of this palace: its magnificent rooms with rotten floors and leaky roofs; its garret full of the shields, armor, and weapons of the king's heroic ancestors; their rusty sabres ranged along the walls, and the worm-eaten wood of their lances couched upon the ground, — dust like the heroes who had borne them. "There are also some books, which the rats alone have read during the last fifty years, and which are covered with the largest cobwebs in Europe, for fear the profane should approach them." In this musty old palace he lived two months. Madame du Châtelet embraced the opportunity of his absence to visit Fontainebleau, where she busied herself in preparing the way for his safe return to Paris. She had bought a very large and handsome house at the capital, which she hoped long to inhabit with her friend, when she had gained her suit in Brussels. Finding the Cardinal de Fleury not too well disposed toward him, she asked the

King of Prussia to use his influence with the cardinal on Voltaire's behalf.

"There is nothing positive against him," she wrote to Frederic, October 16, 1740; "but an infinitude of trifling grievances can all together do as much harm as real wrongs. It will depend upon your majesty alone to dissipate all those clouds, and it would suffice if only M. Camas [Prussian ambassador] would not conceal the favor with which your majesty honors him and the interest which you deign to take in him. I am very certain that would be enough to secure M. de Voltaire a repose which he has a right to enjoy, and of which his health has need."¹

The king did not neglect to comply with this request. He had already more than once conveyed to the cardinal intimations of his warm regard for Voltaire, and Voltaire himself had taken pains to keep the French court advised of the same. Usually, he was careless about the address and date of his letters; but now, at the head of all his letters for Paris, he was careful to write, "At the Hague, at the Palace of the King of Prussia." Nor did he fail to communicate to his correspondents at court the more striking proofs of the king's favor towards him. Thus, on the very day, June 18th, upon which he answered the first letter written to him by King Frederic, he wrote to the Marquis d'Argenson, telling him what a tender and affectionate letter the young king had written him, and how the king had enjoined it upon him to write to him only as man to man. As soon as he had copies of the "Anti-Machiavelli" ready, he sent one to Madame du Châtelet for presentation to the Cardinal de Fleury, leaving the cardinal to guess the secret of its authorship, which was known to Europe. Thus the way was prepared for a closer connection with "the mitred Machiavelli" than either of them could have anticipated.

¹ *Lettres de la Marquise du Châtelet*, page 396. Paris, 1878.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

VOLTAIRE AS AMATEUR DIPLOMATIST.

IN the early autumn of 1740, the system of personal government, as then established in Europe, presented itself in its fairest aspect. There was peace among the nations, and each of the individuals upon whom its continuance most depended had a personal reason of the most powerful nature to preserve it. Frederic, as we know, was ardent to carry out his project of engrafting French civilization. George II., of England, was never so sure of his native, hereditary Hanover as when Europe was at peace. The Emperor Charles VI. was a bankrupt, struggling to restore his finances. The Cardinal de Fleury, always devoted to a pacific policy, always more a priest than a minister, was then eighty-seven years of age.

Science, art, literature, the amelioration of the common lot, — all the dearest interests of man, that languish in war and revive in peace, — seemed more than ever the objects sought by governments, societies, and individuals. Three kings at once invited Maupertuis in 1740. An advocate of the system by which the interests and rights of two hundred millions of human beings were annexed, by the accident of birth, to the caprice of the dozen worst educated of them all might have been pardoned if, on the 15th of October, 1740, he had pointed to the condition of public affairs as an evidence that personal government, however absurd in theory, was still well suited to the imperfect development of man.

A trifling incident changed all. One day an elderly gentleman in Vienna, called Charles VI., Emperor of Germany, ate too many mushrooms! He died, and Maria Theresa, his daughter, reigned in his stead. A young lady of twenty-three, married to an ordinary man, was to hold together an extensive, incoherent empire, parts of which were hers by titles that could be called in question. All the powers were bound

by treaty to recognize her as the heir to the whole of her father's dominions. But that father was gone from the scene, — dead before his time, — a victim to his love of an expensive vegetable. A spell was broken! The political system of Europe was at an end. Each power sat wondering what the others would do, watching for the outthrust of an arm toward the chestnuts left suddenly without protection. Thirteen years of war and tribulation followed, involving Europe and America; causing more damage than arithmetic can compute, and more misery than language can utter; ending in salutary rectifications of the maps of both hemispheres, — ending in the United States of to-day and the Prussia of to-day.

Voltaire was still inhabiting the King of Prussia's palace at the Hague when those historic mushrooms did their fatal work. Besides his proof-reading and his copy-distributing, he was negotiating, on Frederic's behalf, with a troupe of Paris actors, whom the king desired to engage permanently for the royal theatre at Berlin, — a troupe complete in all the kinds: tragedy, comedy, opera, and ballet. He was writing, also, to his literary and philosophic friends in France, as we have seen, urging them to repair to Berlin, the new seat of the Muses, the new home of philosophy and toleration. He was soon himself to visit the king at his old abode at Remusburg, to discuss further all those fine schemes for making Berlin a more solid and tolerant Paris. In the midst of this joyous and hopeful activity occurred the disaster of the imperial indigestion.

“My dear Voltaire,” wrote Frederic, October 26, 1740, “an event the least expected hinders me this time from opening my soul to yours as usual, and gossiping with you as I should like. The emperor is dead. This death disarranges all my pacific ideas; and my opinion is that, in the month of June next, we shall be occupied with gunpowder, soldiers, and earthworks, rather than with actresses, ballets, and theatres; so that I find myself obliged to suspend the contract we were making [with the comedians]. My affair at Liege is all finished; but those of the present moment are of the greatest consequence for Europe. This is the moment of the total change of the ancient system of policy; it is that detached rock which rolled upon the image of four metals which Nebu-

chadnezer saw, and which destroyed them all. I am a thousand times obliged to you for the printing of the Machiavelli. I could not work upon it at present; I am overwhelmed with business."

But Voltaire was to visit the king, all the same; and he understood the political situation sufficiently well to see that, at such a moment, he might be of use to an aged, apprehensive French minister. What did this young enthusiast of a king mean to do? That was a question upon which, perhaps, he could get some precious information during his stay at Remusburg. He wrote to the cardinal, acknowledging the favorable disposition towards himself which Madame du Châtelet had made known to him, and denying that he had anything but respect for true religion. "Formerly," he wrote, "the Cardinal de Fleury loved me, when I used to see him at the château of Madame de Villars." Two days after, he announced to the cardinal his intention to visit Remusburg and pay his court to "a monarch who took the Cardinal de Fleury's way of thinking as his model." He also reminded his Eminence that he had lately sent him a copy of a certain "Anti-Machiavelli," a work in which his Eminence's own sentiments were expressed, and which had been inspired by his Eminence's own motive, a desire to promote the happiness of mankind. "Whoever may be the author of this work, if your Eminence will deign to indicate to me that you approve it, I am sure that the author, who is already full of esteem for you personally, will add his friendship also, and cherish still more the nation of which you make the felicity."

The aged minister, disturbed already by unexplained movements of Prussian troops, poured forth two long, affectionate letters to Voltaire on the same day, November 14, 1740. His ancient love, such as it was, experienced a surprising revival. He became a father to Frederic's friend, a wise, indulgent sire, who knew how to allow for the vagaries of genius and the escapades of youth.

"You did me wrong [he wrote] if you thought that I have ever wished you the least ill; and I have been sorry for that only which you have done to yourself. I think I know you perfectly. You are a good and honest man. That first quality certainly will not harm you, and you are aware that Cicero gave it the first rank in the char-

acter of great orators. But you have been young; and perhaps you were young a little too long. You passed your youth in the company which the thoughtless world regards as the best, because it is composed of great lords. They applauded you, and with reason; but they yielded to you in everything, and they went too far. Very soon they spoiled you; and, at your age, that was natural. I trust that you feel it yourself; and that which gives me the most pleasure, in your letter of the 2d of this month, is the passage in which you speak of your respect for religion. It is a grand word, and let me, I pray you, give to what you say all the extent which my friendship for you makes me desire for it. Among the great number of duties which an honest man is bound to fulfill, can that one be excepted which regards our sovereign Master and our Creator? Even the pagans do not think so. Return, then, to your country with these sentiments, or, at least, with a willingness to yield yourself to them. You do your country honor by your talents; give it also the consolation to see those talents employed for the public good, the only end of genuine and solid glory. I have always esteemed you and loved you: I cannot give you a better proof of it than in speaking to you with the freedom that I now do."

Then, with regard to the King of Prussia, nothing, he thought, could be more becoming in Voltaire than to pay his homage to so glorious a prince.

"I was not aware [continued the cardinal] that the precious gift which Madame la Marquise du Châtelet made me of the 'Anti-Machiavelli' came from you. It is all the more dear to me as your gift, and I thank you for it with all my heart. As I have but few moments to bestow upon my pleasure, I have only been able to read about forty pages or so, and I shall try to finish it in what I call, very improperly, my retreat; for it is, unhappily, too much disturbed for repose. Whoever may be the author of this work, if he is not a prince, he deserves to be one; and the little which I have read of it is so wise, so reasonable, and expresses principles so admirable, that the author would be worthy to command other men, provided he has the courage to put them in practice. If he was born a prince, he contracts a very solemn engagement with the public; and the Emperor Antoninus would not have acquired the immortal glory which he retains, age after age, if he had not sustained by the justice of his government the exquisite morality of which he had given such instructive lessons to all sovereigns. . . . I should be infinitely touched if his Prussian majesty could find in my conduct some conformity with his principles; but I can at least assure you that I regard his as the outline of the

most perfect and most glorious government. Corruption is so general and good faith so indecently banished from all hearts in this unhappy age that, if we do not hold very firmly to the superior motives which oblige us not to depart from right principles, we shall sometimes be tempted to lay them aside on certain occasions; but the king, my master, makes it plainly evident that he does not claim the right to use reprisals of this kind, and, at the first moment of the news of the emperor's death, he assured the Prince de Lichtenstein that he would faithfully keep all his engagements. I fall without thinking of it into political reflections, and I conclude by assuring you that I shall endeavor not to render myself unworthy of the good opinion which his Prussian majesty deigns to have of me."

The King of France, then, meant to keep the peace, — meant to respect the claims of Maria Theresa. Could the author of the "Anti-Machiavelli" do less?

Early in November, the season no longer favorable for traveling, Voltaire set out from the Hague on his journey to Remusburg, distant not less by the usual road than three hundred miles. At the moment of his departure, who should arrive but a young man, Dumolard by name, recommended by Thieriot for the service of the King of Prussia as librarian. That monarch had ceased to want librarians; but, nevertheless, he took him into his carriage, and thus had a traveling companion. The king, moreover, had been remiss in paying Thieriot's salary and expenditures as Paris agent and news-writer, and it occurred to Voltaire that the arrival of Dumolard would furnish an occasion for him to jog the memory of a king overwhelmed with business. "Send me at once," he wrote to Thieriot, "the amount of your disbursements; do not doubt that his majesty will act generously." Thieriot, in fact, was getting tired of writing letters and making purchases, even for a king, without receiving an occasional remittance.

The usual breakdown of their carriage occurred soon after they had entered the dominions of Frederic. One of their servants, as Voltaire told the king, asked help of some natives, who, not acquainted with the French language, supposed he wanted something to drink. Another servant ran off without knowing where. "Dumolard proved a man of resources, as if he had not been a scholar." Voltaire, accoutred as he was in velvet breeches, silk stockings, and low shoes, mounted one

of the carriage horses, restive and sharp-backed, and thus approached the walled town of Herford. "Who goes there?" cried the sentinel. "Don Quixote," answered Voltaire; and under that name he entered the city.

Two weeks of laborious travel brought him to the château of Remusburg, where he found a numerous and gay company of the king's friends, including his sister of Bayreuth. The quinine which Voltaire had recommended — a new remedy then — had broken the king's ague, and he was able to meet his guests in the evening. To all appearance nothing had changed, if not that the king was *more* bent on pleasure than usual; every evening a concert, at which he played two or three concertos on the flute; a merry supper afterward, with verses, play, dancing, and "eating to burst." Voltaire, who was always improved in health by a journey, was in his brightest mood, and pleased the king better than before. When opportunity served, the great topic of the day, the death of the emperor and its possible consequences, was spoken of between them. The flattering letter of the cardinal upon the "Anti-Machiavelli" was brought into play; or, as Voltaire wrote to the cardinal, "I have obeyed the orders which your Eminence did not give me, and have shown your letter to the King of Prussia." It was a bad move. He would not have recalled that embarrassing publication if he had known what was passing in the king's mind, and whither those regiments were tending which were on the march in various parts of the Prussian dominions.

But he did not know. Frederic II. had two kingly traits, — decision and secrecy, — without which no man is king. He knew precisely what he meant to do, and he confided his intention only to the three individuals who must of necessity know it. This excessive gayety, these rollicking verses, this musical assiduity, these feasts and balls, were merely his mode of concealing himself during the weeks that had to elapse before he was ready to begin his invasion of Silesia. Voltaire, therefore, after his six days' stay at Remusburg, went away without having discovered or guessed Frederic's purpose. He mentions in his "History of the Reign of Louis XV." that he was with the King of Prussia at this critical time, and could assert positively that Cardinal de Fleury had not the

least idea what kind of a prince he had to do with. He did not conceal his disappointment. Before leaving he gave the king this epigram: —

“No, despite your virtues, no, despite your charms, my soul is not satisfied; no, you are only a coquette who subjugates hearts, but does not give one.”

To this the king made a happy reply: “My soul feels the value of your divine charms, but does not presume to be satisfied. Traitor, you leave me to follow a coquette, — me, who would not leave you.”

The amateur diplomatist went to Berlin to pay his respects to the queen and the queen dowager; to Potsdam also; then returned to Berlin, where again he saw the king, and joined the French ambassador in vain attempts to divine impending events. To both of them, on the subject of his intentions, the king was still evasive or dumb. Early in December the visitor set out on his return to the Hague, leaving Berlin excited and expectant, waiting anxiously for a development of the king's designs. The royal manifesto which briefly announced them was published about a week after Voltaire's departure, and while he was still struggling along on miry German roads.

We perceive from their familiar letters that, during this visit, each of these gushing lovers discovered that the other was human. The king asked for an account of Voltaire's expenditures in his service, — moneys spent in journeys between Brussels and Holland, printer's charges, copyist's wages, and other items. In reckoning with the king, Voltaire added the expenses of the present journey, which was undertaken at Frederic's urgent request, as well as for his pleasure and purposes, — its diplomatic character being an incident and an after-thought. The total was thirteen hundred crowns [*écus*]. And most of it was for the “Anti-Machiavelli,” so absurdly embarrassing at that moment! This king, moreover, had another royal trait, without which no man is long a king, namely, a fixed principle and habit of ruling his expenses with exactness. He was no lavish semblance of a monarch, like a Louis XIV., but the veritable ruler of his country, and in some degree aware of his responsibility to his “fellow-citizens,” whose hard-earned money he administered, not owned.

But Voltaire also possessed this trait of the victor. He, too, knew the value of money, and hence presented his large sum total, only omitting from the account five months of his own time, so precious in Frederic's eyes. The king paid the bill with a wry face. He even exhibited the wry face to Jordan.

"Your miser," wrote the king, November 28th, to that most familiar of all his familiars, "will drink the dregs of his insatiable desire to enrich himself; he will have thirteen hundred crowns. His six days' visit will cost me five hundred and fifty crowns a day. This is paying a fool [*fou*] well. Never did the buffoon of a great lord have such wages."

This might have been deemed the irritation of a moment, if the king had not added, two days after, "The brain of the poet is as light as the style of his works, and I flatter myself that the attractiveness of Berlin will have power enough to make him return thither immediately, and the more since the purse of the marchioness is not always as well furnished as mine. You will deliver to this man, extraordinary in everything, the letter inclosed, with a little compliment in the style of a knowing procuress." Again, a day or two after, "I can assure you that Voltaire has made a subtle collection of the ridiculous people of Berlin for reproduction at the proper time and place, and that the Secretary of the Impromptus [*Jordan*] will have his place among them, as I mine. I have lost those verses which he wrote upon some tablets. Send them to me again."

It is a bad habit in a king to allow himself such license as this; for the time comes, at last, when the contrast between the language addressed *to* a favorite and the language employed in speaking *of* him comes to the favorite's knowledge. There were, in fact, two men in this Frederic II. of Prussia, as in an engrafted tree there are two trees. His stock was that of a strong, coarse, hard, ambitious, upright and down-right Prussian soldier, — very much what his father would have been if he had had a good French tutor in his boyhood, and avoided excess in wine and tobacco. Inheriting something less of animal vigor than that of the paternal "ogre," Frederic had had an intelligent and gifted French teacher, who engrafted upon him that culture which made him, for half a century,

turn to Voltaire with longing and admiration, even from the field of battle, — even from the midst of carnage, disaster, defeat, and despair. But he never was a Frenchman; with all his merits he was an imperfectly civilized being.

In France, in Rome, in England, in New England, in all advanced civilizations, women are at once the price and prize of the social system; its risk and its reward. They do not rule; they reign. They are not formed to rule, but to give lustre, charm, interest, and dignity to social life. Now, this Prussian Frederic, with such a terminagant of a mother as he had, and a mild, submissive princess forced upon him as a wife, came to hold the whole sex in a certain aversion, and never admitted one of them to his familiar court. He tried to be happy without paying the price. He tried to enjoy the play without buying a ticket. His correspondence with his wife is one of the curiosities of epistolary literature, — brief, punctual, polite, and, as the poor queen herself remarked, icy, *glaciale*. The whole forty-seven years of it occupies no more space than his correspondence with Voltaire during single months. He would announce to her the gain or loss of a battle in three lines, in two lines, in one line, while writing to him four pages. In communicating to her the news of the battle of Soor, he extended himself to three lines, half a line of which read thus: “*They say* that Prince Louis is wounded.” Prince Louis was the queen’s brother. On another occasion he announced to her the death of a brother in battle, and added, “I pity you, madame, for the pain which it is natural you should feel at the death of your relations, but these are events for which there is no remedy.”

The queen was not insensible to this treatment. “I am accustomed to his manners,” she wrote on this occasion to one of her brothers, “but not on that account the less wounded by them, especially at such a time, when one of my brothers has lost his life in his service. It is too cruel for him to have such manners.”¹

It was not “manners;” the man was dead on that side. It was not possible for him to feel with a woman’s heart, or see with a woman’s eyes, or have the least intimation of the complex reasons, for example, why Voltaire could not break the

¹ 26 Œuvres de Frédéric le Grand, 23.

irksome bond that bound him to an exacting and exasperating marchioness. He endeavored to supply the void in his life, — which women alone can fill in men's lives and hearts — by surrounding himself with the most gifted spirits in Europe. It is consoling to know that this attempt was not successful.

Voltaire, meanwhile, was hastening homeward, dreading to meet his tyrant at Brussels. He had originally timed his flight into Prussia so as to get back before she had returned from Fontainebleau. The king had begged him for two more days; but away he sped to the Hague; whence, pursuing his journey by water, he was caught in the ice, and detained motionless twelve days. He employed the time, in the cabin of the vessel, in working upon his tragedy of "Mahomet" and writing long letters to his friends. He might well be afraid to meet Madame du Châtelet. She looked upon this diplomatic adventure with the indignation and alarm of a woman who had detected her lover going to a rendezvous. He was a whole month in getting from Berlin to Brussels, a journey now of ten hours, so that he was two months absent! She poured out her sorrows to the Count d'Argental: —

"I have been cruelly repaid for all that I did for him at Fontainebleau, where I put in good train for him an affair the most difficult that can be imagined. I procure for M. de Voltaire an honorable return to his country; I restore to him the good-will of the ministry; I open to him the road to the Academies; in a word, I give him back in three weeks all that he had taken pains to lose in six years. Do you know how he recompenses so much zeal and attachment? When he sets out for Berlin he dryly sends me the news of his departure, well knowing that it would pierce my heart; and he abandons me to a grief without example, of which others have not the idea, and which your heart alone can comprehend. I heated my blood so much by sitting up at night, and my chest was in so bad a condition, that a fever has seized me, and I hope soon to end my life. . . . Would you believe that the idea which occupies me most in these fatal moments is the frightful grief which will be the lot of M. de Voltaire when the intoxication wherein he now is of the court of Prussia is diminished? I cannot sustain the thought that the recollection of me will one day be his torment. All those who have loved me must refrain from reproaching him."

These words were written at the time when Voltaire was using all his force to tear himself from that intoxicating court,

only that he might rejoin her. Nevertheless, the unhappy woman was not altogether mistaken. The tie which bound him to her was beginning to be extremely inconvenient, and he sometimes said as much to his intimate friends. From the cabin of his yacht he wrote to the King of Prussia some lines which Madame du Châtelet might have read with advantage to both: —

“I abandon a great monarch who cultivates and honors an art which I idolize, and I go to join a person who reads nothing but the metaphysics of Christianus Volvius. I tear myself from the most amiable court in Europe for a lawsuit. I did not leave your adorable court to sigh like an idiot at a woman’s knees. But, sire, that woman abandoned for me everything for which other women abandon their friends. There is no sort of obligation which I am not under to her. The coiffure and the petticoat which she wears do not render the duties of gratitude less sacred. Love is often ridiculous; but pure friendship has rights more binding than a king’s commands. My little fortune mingled with hers places no obstacle to the extreme desire which I have to pass my days near your majesty.”

The news of the invasion of Silesia in December smoothed the way for the happy return of the baffled diplomatist; for he could assign to his departure a motive more dignified than lovers can usually offer for their late return. Peace was soon restored between them, and Voltaire could write to their guardian angel, D’Argental, that they were more lovers than ever, and that he would not go to Prussia if the king should make him a free gift of Silesia.

The invasion of that province astonished no man in Europe more than it did Voltaire; and he was obliged to agree with Madame du Châtelet that there could not be a more glaring contradiction between word and deed than the seizure of the province presented to various passages of the “Anti-Machiavelli,” which the editor had modified, but not erased. Madame was not ill pleased to see the idol step down from his pedestal. “He may take as many provinces as he likes,” said she, “if he does not take from me that which makes the happiness of my life.” Voltaire was something more than astonished, so warmly had he certified to the young monarch’s pacific and magnanimous character. He did not know what to think. He wrote to the Countess d’Argental, March 13, 1741:

“I do not yet know if the King of Prussia deserves the interest which we take in him. He is a king; that makes one tremble. Time will tell.” On the same day to Cideville: “The cat of La Fontaine, metamorphosed into a woman, runs after the mice as soon as she catches sight of them, and the prince throws off his philosopher’s mantle and takes the sword as soon as he sees a province at his mercy.” Again to Cideville, a little later: “After all, he is only a king.” The strangest thing of all was that Frederic, from the midst of his rapid campaign, found time to write his usual chatty, poetical epistles to Voltaire, and wrote with all his former careless gayety.

Nor did Voltaire neglect to call the king’s attention, with his usual adroitness, to the apparent inconsistency of his proceedings in Silesia. On recovering from an indisposition in April, 1741, he wrote thus to the young conqueror: “I put only one foot upon the border of the Styx; but I was very sorry, sire, at the number of poor wretches that I saw passing over. Some arrived from Scharding, others from Prague or from Iglau. Will you not cease — you and the kings, your colleagues — to ravage this earth, which you have, you say, so much desire to render happy?” To which the king replied in a tone as far removed from that of the “Anti-Machiavelli” as even Madame du Châtelet could have desired, in her worst humor. “You ask me,” said he, “how long messieurs my brother kings have given themselves the word to devastate the earth. My reply is that I know nothing about it; only it is the fashion at present to make war, and there is reason to believe that it will last a long time. The Abbé de Saint-Pierre, who sufficiently distinguishes me to honor me with his correspondence, has sent me a beautiful work upon a mode of restoring peace to Europe, and of preserving it forever. The thing is very practicable. Nothing is wanting to make it succeed except the consent of Europe, and some other bagatelles of that kind.”

Voltaire, however, returned to the charge both in prose and in verse. He told the king how much he wondered and lamented that the Solomon of the North should have become its Alexander, the affright of the world, after having been the object of its love. “I hate heroes; they make too much dis-

turbance. I hate those conquerors who find their supreme happiness in the horrors of the fight." Even the victories of the king wrung from him only a qualified congratulation. "I think of humanity, sire, before thinking of yourself; but after having, like the Abbé de Saint-Pierre, wept for the human race, of which you have become the terror, I deliver myself to all the joy which your glory gives me. That glory will be complete if your majesty forces the Queen of Hungary to accept peace and to make the Germans happy. . . . Go on, sire; but make at least as many people happy in this world as you have taken out of it."

To this the king promptly replied: "Do not believe me cruel; but think rather that I am reasonable enough to choose an evil when it is necessary to avoid a worse. Every man who makes up his mind to have a tooth out when it is decayed would give battle when he wished to terminate a war. To shed blood in such a conjuncture is truly to spare it; it is a blood-letting which we give an enemy in delirium, and which restores him to his senses." Voltaire again pressing the king hard, and reminding him that it was he who *began* the war, Frederic rejoined, with what was intended to be a home thrust, "You declaim at your ease against those who sustain their rights and their claims by force of arms; but I remember a time when, if you had had an army, it would, no doubt, have marched against the Desfontaines, the Rousseaus, the Van Durens, and others. Until the platonic arbitration of the Abbé Saint-Pierre is established, there will remain no other resource to kings to terminate their differences."

In this strange correspondence they touched all their usual topics, even religion; the king again remonstrating with Voltaire for troubling himself with a subject at once so trivial and so perilous. "There are so many things," he wrote once from camp, "to be said against religion that I wonder they do not occur to everybody. But men are not made for the truth. I regard them as a herd of deer in the park of a great lord, which have no function but to people and occupy the inclosure."

Voltaire remonstrated: "I fear that you are coming to despise men too much. The millions of animals without feathers, with two feet, who people the earth, are at an immense

distance from your person, as well in their souls as in their condition. There is a beautiful verse of Milton : —

‘ Amongst unequals no society.’¹

Lib. viii., v. 387.

He hoped, however, that the king would not take too severe a view of human nature, nor think a king could not be loved for his own sake. And so each of these sovereigns of Europe pursued his career, and exchanged their thoughts; neither quite sincere with the other; and each having for the other a considerable, even a warm, but no longer an unqualified regard.

¹ “ Amongst unequals what society

Can sort, what harmony or true delight ? ”

Paradise Lost, Book VIII.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

“MAHOMET” AND “MÉROPE.”

THE first week of the new year, 1741, found him again settled at Brussels, much improved in health by his two months' contention with the elements. Madame du Châtelet and himself were at once absorbed in labors, literary and legal, scientific and metaphysical, dramatic and historical. An important point was gained, this spring, in the interminable lawsuit, after two years of exertion; and it was gained, as Voltaire observes, by the courage, the intelligence, and the fatigues of Madame du Châtelet. This advantage, he thought, would abridge the suit by two years, and made final success probable.

The reader may imagine that such a disturbed, tumultuous life, so far from books and conveniences, must have been detrimental to an author's proper work. It would have been to that of most men; but Voltaire was, as the King of Prussia remarked, extraordinary in everything. These interruptions may have saved him. He possessed, moreover, the power of snatching his work from the social tumult, the domestic broil, the mire, the waves, the ice. He could work in his carriage; he could elaborate a play in the cabin of an ice-bound vessel; he could dictate in bed; and when he was so sick that he could not do that, he could always, as Madame du Châtelet mentions, correct his poems, and even compose verses for a tragedy. He never worked more successfully than during this Brussels lawsuit period, from 1739 to 1745; and so he thought himself. "I have never," he wrote to Cideville in January, 1740, when he was in the full tide of his "Mahomet," "been so inspired by my gods, or so possessed by my demons. I know not if the last efforts I have made are those of a fire about to be extinguished."

That famous tragedy, one of the most vigorously tem-

pered of all his plays, was now ready for the stage. The moment chosen for the action of this drama is indicated by two of its celebrated lines: —

“ Aujourd’hui c’est un prince ; il triomphe, il domine ;
Imposteur à la Mecque, et prophète à Medine.”

Revered as a prophet, as *the* prophet, at Medina, his native Mecca is still restrained to the old ways by an aged, powerful sheik, the venerable and beloved Zopire. Mahomet and a few of his chiefs are allowed to enter Mecca, where, first, they seek to gain over Zopire and his party by argument and persuasion. This gives occasion to some scenes of commanding interest, in which Voltaire rises to a degree of dramatic force and fire which we can enjoy even without forgetting Shakespeare; and this the more as he did not himself forget Shakespeare. There are reminiscences of Brutus and Cassius in some of these fierce dialogues of “Mahomet;” the most important of which are between the aged Zopire and the chief of the new religion. But the spirit of those dialogues was the new wine which was to break the old bottles of the European system to pieces, and intoxicate the human soul. The old sheik taunts Omar, a trusted lieutenant of Mahomet, with the low birth of his prophet. “Mortals are equal,” replies Omar; “not birth, but worth alone, makes the difference between them. Mahomet is one of those spirits, heaven-endowed, who are what they are of themselves, and owe to their ancestors nothing.”

The great lesson of the play is that the founders of false religions at once despise and practice upon the docile credulity of men. When I remember that this powerful exhibition of executive force triumphing over credulity and weakness was vividly stamped upon the susceptible brain of Frederic by Voltaire’s impassioned declamation, at the very time when he was revolving his Silesian project, I am inclined to the conjecture that it may have been the deciding influence upon the king’s mind. All the utterances of Mahomet and Omar breathe the same impious contempt of human kind which the King of Prussia so often expressed at this period of his life. “The people, blind and feeble, are born for the great,—are born to admire, to believe, and obey us.” ZOPIRE. — “Who made him king? Who crowned him? OMAR. — “Victory!”

ZOPIRE. — “What right have you received to teach, to foretell, to carry the censer, to affect the empire?” MAHOMET. — “*The right which a spirit, vast and firm in its designs, has over the dull souls of common men.*”

In the earlier scenes of the play the interest is chiefly intellectual; it is the conflict between the virtuous adherents of an ancient faith and the ruthless founder of a new one. Later, the interest arises from the struggle of opposing passions. It is necessary to Mahomet's purposes that the aged Zopire should be destroyed, and he selects as the assassin a young zealot, weak enough, as Omar intimates, to *believe* the new religion, without thought or question. But it requires the utmost exertion of Mahomet's fascinating and commanding personality to work the brave youth up to the point of slaying a defenseless old man. When he recoils, Mahomet addresses him thus: —

“Rash man, to deliberate is sacrilege. Far from me be mortals bold enough to judge for themselves, and see with their own eyes. Whoever dares to think is not born to be my disciple. Your sole glory is to obey in silence. Know you who I am? Know you the place wherein my voice charged you with the commands of heaven? If Mecca is a sacred spot, do you know the reason? Abraham was born here, and here his dust reposes,— Abraham, whose arm, submissive to the Eternal, drew his only son to the steps of the altar, stifling for his God the cries of nature. And when that God by you desires to avenge his wrong, you hesitate! Go, base idolater; fly, serve, crawl, under my proud enemies!”

The young fanatic yields; the murder is done; and Mahomet rules in Mecca. A complicated love story intensifies the later scenes, and renders the play effective upon the French stage. The obvious perils which such a subject offered to such a poet were avoided with much art, and the weight of the satire was carefully confined to *false* religion.

Among the English visitors to Brussels who frequented the house of Madame du Châtelet was Lord Chesterfield, and to him Voltaire read portions of the play. Chesterfield deemed it a covert attack upon the Christian religion. He thought that where the author wrote Mahomet he meant Jesus Christ. But, assuredly, in the play as we now have it, there is not a

phrase that gives the slightest countenance to such an idea. If there are in it any allusions to Christian history or French fanatic assassinations, they are completely veiled from foreign eyes.

And now, in the spring of 1741, the tragedy was ready for presentation. The retirement of two or three leading actors from the Théâtre-Français induced the author to defer its production there, when an opportunity occurred to exhibit it upon a provincial stage near at hand. It was those fatal mushrooms of the German emperor that gave him this unexpected chance. The company of French comedians with whom he had been negotiating on behalf of the King of Prussia were then established at the large industrial city of Lille, fifty miles west of Brussels, where also his niece, Madame Denis, lived with her husband. The manager was indignant upon learning that the treaty was to be broken off. He was of opinion that the king had gone too far to retreat without dishonor. He was even tempted to expose the proceeding to the public, and to select a moment for the purpose when the eyes of Europe were fixed upon the King of Prussia. Voltaire hastened to appease him, and as one means to that end consented to the first production of his "Mahomet" at Lille.

The play was given in May, 1741; the author present, accompanied by Madame du Châtelet and Madame Denis; the theatre filled with an expectant and excited auditory, flattered by a distinction accorded to a stage two hundred miles from Paris. The first acts passed off extremely well. While the poet was sitting in his box waiting for the third act to begin, a dispatch was handed to him from the King of Prussia, announcing the victory of Molwitz, the first of his long series of triumphs in the field. The dispatch of two lines, written two days after the battle, was penned by a flying victor, by a commanding general who ran away from his own victorious army:—

"It is said the Austrians are in retreat, and I believe it is true.

FREDERIC."¹

The people of Lille, who had been besieged by Austrian troops within living memory, could be nothing less than enthusiastic partisans of a young monarch warring against Aus-

¹ Voltaire to D'Argental, May 5, 1741.

tria at the head of his own battalions. The author of the play, prompt to seize an advantage, rose in his box and read the dispatch to the audience, who received it with the due thunders of applause. The play itself seemed to share the triumph of the king, and it was played to the end with a success the most unequivocal. It was repeated the next evening with equal applause, and was demanded for the third time. "*We came near,*" writes Madame du Châtelet, "exciting a riot in the pit, because *we* hesitated to accord the third representation." There was even a fourth presentation of the play, at the house of one of the magistrates, for the convenience of the clergy, who, as the poet remarked, "wished absolutely to see a founder of religion." This, also, received the unanimous approval of the spectators, who were of opinion that the author had avoided the rocks and quicksands which the subject presented. The performance of the play also justified the author's high recommendation of the company to the king. "The manager," he wrote, "with the face of a monkey, played Mahomet better than Dufresne, and Baron made the whole audience cry, as when one bleeds from the nose."

These performances of the tragedy upon a provincial stage the author regarded only as dress rehearsals, and he subjected it to many a severe revision. One thing was reassuring: the clergy of Lille saw no offense in it. And, in very truth, even from a Jansenist point of view, there *was* no offense; not a line, not a phrase, to which the most sensitive Catholic could plausibly object. Various circumstances retarded its representation in Paris. A Turkish envoy, with a numerous suite, was a conspicuous figure in the great houses of Paris during the next winter, and the poet thought "it would not be decent to blacken the Prophet while entertaining his ambassador." The Turk departed at length, when a far more alarming obstacle arose. At a moment, in the summer of 1742, when Frederic of Prussia seemed about to enter upon that course of politics which was to make him an enemy of France, and when, in consequence, he was an unpopular person in Paris, one of Voltaire's comic versified letters to the king appeared in the gazettes. A post-office clerk at Brussels, following the example of his superiors, had broken the seal, copied the letter, and put it on its way to publicity.

“Here I am, sire,” it began, “in Paris; *your* capital, I believe, for all the fools and all the wits, clergy, lawyers, dandies, pedants, speak of you without pause. As soon as I come in sight, crowds surround me and block my way, saying, *Have you seen him?*” Forty lines of these airy nothings, ending with a sentence or two in prose: “But, sire, will you be always taking cities, and shall I always be at the tail of a lawsuit? Will there not be this summer some happy hours, when I can pay my court to your majesty?”

This to a king whom the people and the ministry were beginning to regard as a public enemy! It cost him a world of trouble and multitudinous denials to parry the stroke. He protested that the letter had not been correctly copied; he wrote eloquently to the king’s mistress, declaring that he was a Frenchman and a patriot; he set in motion all the means of influence within his command. Luckily, the Cardinal de Fleury, in his extreme anxiety during the crisis, again thought of Voltaire as a possible conciliator of the King of Prussia; and so the storm blew over, leaving the public in some ill-humor with the author of a play announced for speedy representation under the title of “Fanaticism, or, Mahomet the Prophet.”

The garrulous advocate, Barbier, probably gave the current gossip of the cafés when he made his entry of August 8, 1742: “Voltaire is generally decried. People are convinced that the letter to the King of Prussia, which he has disavowed, is certainly his. . . . Madame du Châtelet is severely reflected upon; it is thought singular that a woman of quality should lead by the hand a man who has rendered himself the object of general contempt. . . . No quarter is now given her upon her gallantries. Her son’s tutor, they say, was selected only because he valued himself upon having no religion. Nothing good is said of Voltaire’s new piece, which, it is thought, will have a bad success [*mauvais succès*].”

Imagine plenty of such talk as this in the more sedate coffee-houses frequented by wig and gown. August 19, 1742, the tragedy was performed at the Théâtre-Français. Every precaution had been taken against every possible danger. The author had submitted the play, in form, to the censorship; he had given the manuscript to the Cardinal de Fleury,

who approved it, and made some suggestions on points purely literary, which the author adopted. The theatre was crowded with an audience the most distinguished that Paris could furnish: many of the ministry were present; one great box was filled with magistrates; a number of the clergy were there; D'Alembert and the literary men were out in force; Voltaire himself conspicuous in the middle of the pit. Some murmurs of disapprobation were occasionally heard; but these were overwhelmed with the general applause, and the play gained, as it seemed, an unquestionable success. A second and third performance appeared only to confirm and establish the verdict of the opening night.

But those few murmurers had their way, notwithstanding. Thieriot used to recount that a professor of theology who was in the theatre the first night rushed out at the close of the play, and went home to the Sorbonne, declaring that the new tragedy was "a bloody satire against the Christian religion," and gave as one reason for the assertion, that the name of Mahomet had three syllables, "the same number as that of the adorable name of Jesus Christ"! The next day the solicitor-general, Joly de Fleuri, an important magistrate, heard of the play in a chamber of the parliament of Paris, and wrote of the same to the lieutenant of police: "I hear a comedy spoken of, which some of these gentlemen have witnessed, and which, they say, contains enormous things against religion." The lieutenant sent a copy of the drama to the solicitor-general, who, without reading it, wrote again to the lieutenant:—

"I need not tell you [said this enlightened personage], that I have not read a word of the play; but, judging from what I hear, I believe it is necessary to forbid its performance. Three persons of my knowledge saw it yesterday, and this is what they say of it: It is the acme of infamies, wickedness, irreligion, and impiety; and such is the judgment also of men who have no religion. One said, during the performance, 'I wonder the audience does not rise and stop the piece.' Another said, 'Here are fine instructions for a Ravaiillac.' Another said, 'The author should be put in Bicêtre for the rest of his days.' One man, on leaving the theatre, met his friend, who was also going out, and asked him what he thought of the play. The reply was, 'I have seen it three times.' To this he responded, 'Never will I see you again. To have had the hardihood three times to see such horrors!' Everybody says that to have written such a piece a man must

be a reprobate fit to burn. This is all I have heard; it is a universal revolt."

The lieutenant of police, aware that the tragedy had received the privilege, despatched a courier extraordinary to Versailles, to convey this appalling letter to the minister, Maurepas, who, in turn, passed it on to the Cardinal de Fleury. The courier was not kept waiting many minutes for his return packet, which contained the following from M. de Maurepas to the lieutenant of police:—

"I took your letter, monsieur, to my lord the cardinal, and read it to him, as well as that of the solicitor-general which was joined thereto. Although his Eminence agrees substantially with you, he is nevertheless of opinion that you ought not to risk a scene for such a cause, and he approves that you suggest to the actors to assign the sickness of one of their number as a pretext for not playing the piece on Friday; also, that you advise Voltaire to withdraw the play from their hands, to avoid commotion. I even believe that you had better begin by the expedient last named, and that he will himself assist you to cover your proceedings. The communication to him of the epithets given his play by the solicitor-general, joined to a certain decree of the parliament, by virtue of which it is in the power of that officer to arraign the author of the *Philosophic Letters* [upon England], will render your argument persuasive; and by this means you will not be committed with any one. I hasten to send back your express, so that you may be able, before the end of the play, to speak to him, or to Madame du Châtelet."

The argument *was* persuasive, and the piece was withdrawn after the fourth representation. The reader remarks, doubtless, that the connection between the author of the tragedy and Madame du Châtelet was recognized and accepted by the ministry.

This abrupt, needless frustration of so many hopes and so much generous toil cannot be realized except by those who have borne something of the kind. There was, too, a witty Piron in the cafés to celebrate the mishap by couplets and epigrams; also, a malign Desfontaines to go about pretending it was *he* who had compelled the withdrawal.

The King of Prussia was not so absorbed in correcting the map of Europe as not to be attentive to what passed at the Théâtre-Français. He asked Voltaire to send him the tragedy

as it had been performed in Paris. The author had it copied, and sent it, with an apology for his countrymen. "It is the story of *Tartuffe* over again," he wrote, August 19, 1742. "Hypocrites persecuted Molière, and fanatics rose against me. I yielded to the torrent without a word. If Socrates had done as much, he would not have drunk the hemlock. I avow that I know nothing which more dishonors my country than this infamous superstition, made to degrade human nature. I ought to have the King of Prussia for a master, and the people of England for fellow-citizens. Our Frenchmen, in general, are only great children; but, also, as I always insist, the small number of thinking beings among us are excellent, and claim pardon for the rest."

The king took him at his word, and urged him to pay him a visit at Aix-la-Chapelle. Voltaire spent a few days with him there in September, when Frederic, who had just signed a treaty of peace, renewed his endeavors to lure him away from his marchioness. He offered him a handsome house in Berlin, a pretty estate in the country, an income ample for both, and the free enjoyment of his time; in return, asking only the pleasure of his society, the honor of his presence, and his advice in matters relating to literature and art. "No more persecution! No more Bastille! No more rude suppressions of immortal dramas! No more flights over the border for a few gay and harmless verses! No Desfontaines! No Jansenists! No convulsionists! Instead of these, life-long basking in the sunshine of royal favor, and the rank in Prussia of a man whom the king delighted to honor. But he remained true to his word. "I courageously resisted all his fine propositions," he wrote to Cideville. "I prefer a second story in the house of Madame du Châtelet; and I hasten to Paris, to my slavery and persecution, like a little Athenian who had refused the bounties of the King of Persia."

Meanwhile, the sudden withdrawal of a successful play by a celebrated author was having the natural effect of making it a European topic. Pamphlets were published upon it. An actor of Lille wrote one in the form of a letter. "The Sentiments of a Spectator" was the title of another. An unauthorized edition of the play was published in Paris at once; another at Brussels within a month; another at Amsterdam,

during the following winter, — all, as the author insisted, more or less incorrect. The poet's own edition was deferred for a while; but it appeared, at length, with unparalleled *éclat*, as we shall see in a moment.

A dramatic author, of all others, needs to have a spare shaft in his quiver; for the fate of a play is something which the astutest dramatist has never learned to foresee. For two years Voltaire had been elaborating a tragedy upon the ancient legend of Mérope, Queen of Messina, a story of the classic sort, like those treated by the elder dramatists. In "Mérope" he ventured to dispense with the passion of love, and to depend for the interest of the drama upon maternal affection. He felt all the difficulty of his scheme. It was his opinion that a reciprocated passion does not move the spectator of a play, and that therefore the love of mother and son cannot be as effective upon the stage as in the written story. "Every scene of a tragedy," he wrote once to Father Porée, "must be a *combat*, and the great rock of the arts is what is called *commonplace*." Nevertheless, he had ventured upon this theme, and he had now the play in his portfolio complete, and ready for the theatre. No sooner was "Mahomet" shelved than he drew forth this hidden treasure, and read it to the comedians. It was accepted and put in rehearsal, the author himself superintending.

The anecdote was current at the time that he had much difficulty in getting Mademoiselle Dumesnil, who played Mérope, to rise to the height of the terrific scene in the fourth act, where the distracted mother reveals her son to the usurper of his throne, — a scene associated since with the glory of the successive queens of the tragic stage of Paris, from Dumesnil to Rachel. Throwing herself between Egisthe and the guards about to lead him to execution, she cries, "*Barbare! il est mon fils!*"

The young tragedienne could not satisfy the author, and he gave the passage himself as he thought it ought to be delivered. "Why," said she, "I should have to have the devil in me to reach the tone you wish!" "Exactly so, mademoiselle!" cried the author. "It is the devil you must have in you, to excel in any of the arts."

The play was represented February 20, 1743. Various cir-

umstances had inflamed public curiosity respecting it: among others, the new attempt of the author to get admission to the French Academy. The death of Cardinal de Fleury, January 29, 1743, had created a vacancy, and there was a ferment at the very idea of a Voltaire succeeding a cardinal. The harsh treatment of the author and the public in the affair of "Mahomet," six months before, must have conciliated many minds. The theatre, accordingly, was filled to repletion with spectators, most of whom seem to have been well disposed toward an author to whom they owed so vast a fund of innocent pleasure.

"Mérope," the most finished and evenly excellent of all Voltaire's tragedies, made also the most thrilling and triumphant first-night of his whole experience as a dramatic author. Its success with the audience was everything that the most sanguine and exacting writer could have anticipated, — a success without previous parallel.

Readers familiar with the old French drama are aware that the simple test formerly applied to tragedy and tragic acting was the quantity of tears they drew from the spectators. "Mérope" drowned the theatre in tears, filled as it was with the fashionable world of Paris, who might be thought hardened against theatrical suffusion. During all the last three acts, we are told, the audience was sobbing. Nor was the play quite wanting in those Voltairean strokes, so much in harmony with the "sentiment" of the period: "He who serves his country well has no need of ancestors!" This, also: "The right to command is no longer an advantage transmitted by nature, like an inheritance." Usually, however, the sentiments were those of the ancient time delineated, and the effects legitimate. Hence prejudice was dissolved, and the triumph was not marred by audible dissent. Advocate Barbier, a dull and narrow chronicler, who was so well pleased to record the forced withdrawal of "Mahomet," assures us that the success of "Mérope" was the most striking ever known in Paris. "The pit," he says, "not only applauded fit to break everything, but asked, a thousand times, that Voltaire should appear upon the stage, that the people might testify to him their joy and satisfaction. Mesdames de Boufflers and de Luxembourg did everything they could to induce the poet to com-

ply with the public desire ; but he withdrew from their box with a submissive air, after having kissed the hand of the Duchess de Luxembourg." The same Barbier records that two of the poet's enemies, Roy and Cahuzac, came near fainting away, if one could judge from the mortal pallor which overspread their visages.

Voltaire himself adds an incident of his triumph. After escaping from the box of the two duchesses, who were his warm partisans, he hid himself somewhere in front of the house. Friends sought him out, and he drew back into the box of his old friend, the Duchess de Villars. "The pit was mad," wrote the poet to one of his friends. "They cried to the duchess to kiss me, and they made so much noise that she was obliged at last to do it, by the order of her mother-in-law. I have been kissed publicly, like Alain Chartier by the Princess Marguerite of Scotland ; but he was asleep, and I was awake."

This was the first time, as French writers inform us, that an author was called for by an audience.

The actor Lekain adds an anecdote of the run of this tragedy. During the third or fourth representation, Voltaire was struck with a defect in one of the dialogues. That very evening, as soon as he had reached home, he made the alterations, and told his servant to carry the packet at once to the house of the actor who played the part of the usurper, Polyphonte, and who was to speak most of the new lines. The valet observed that it was past midnight, and that it was impossible to wake the actor at that hour. "Go, go," said the author ; "tyrants never sleep !"

But this fine tragedy did not open to its author the doors of the French Academy. The death of Cardinal de Fleury, in January, 1743, made a chair vacant, and there was a strong movement to secure it for the man whose absence from the Academy was beginning to cast a certain ridicule upon it. He desired the chair as a protection against his enemies. "The tranquillity of my life," he wrote, "depends upon my getting it." He desired it not less, perhaps, because his election would be a victory over his enemies, whom he believed to be the enemies of man and truth. As the king had a veto upon the election, it was necessary to gain, besides the vote of the Academy itself, the concurrence of three individuals: the king's

mistress, the king's chief minister, and the king. It is Voltaire himself who informs us of his endeavor to secure this concurrence, and what came of it.

“Several Academicians [he says] wished that I should have the cardinal's place in the French Academy. At the king's supper table, the question was asked who was to pronounce the funeral oration of the cardinal at the Academy. The king replied that it was to be me. His mistress, the Duchess de Châteauroux, desired it; but the Count de Maurepas, secretary of state, did not. He had the mania to embroil himself with all the king's mistresses, and he did not find it advantageous.

“An old imbecile, tutor to the Dauphin, formerly a monk, and then Bishop of Mirepoix, Boyer by name, undertook, for reasons of conscience, to second the caprice of M. de Maurepas. This Boyer had the bestowal of the church benefices; to him the king abandoned all the affairs of the clergy; and he treated this matter as a point of ecclesiastical discipline. He argued that for a profane person like myself to succeed a cardinal would be to offend God. Knowing that M. de Maurepas was urging him to act in this way, I called upon the minister, and said to him, ‘A place in the Academy is not a very important dignity; but, after one has been named for it, it is painful to be excluded. You are on ill terms with Madame de Châteauroux, whom the king loves, and with the Duke de Richelieu, who governs her; what, I pray you, has a poor place in the French Academy to do with your differences? I conjure you to answer me frankly. In case Madame de Châteauroux carries the day over the Bishop de Mirepoix, will you oppose her?’ He reflected a moment, and said to me, ‘Yes; and I will crush you!’

“The priest, in fact, triumphed over the mistress; and I did not get the place, for which I cared little.”

For which he cared too much! We have a long letter of his, written in the heat of the canvass, to the “old imbecile” Boyer, Bishop of Mirepoix, which takes unjustifiable liberties with the truth. He seems to have thought it right to fight fire with fire, solemn humbug with solemn humbug. He begins by saying that he had long been persecuted by calumny, which he had long been in the habit of pardoning; and, from Socrates to Descartes, it had been a habit with envious rivals, where they could not assail an author's works or morals, to attack his religion.

“Thanks to Heaven,” he proceeds, “my religion teaches

me that it is necessary to know how to suffer. The God who founded it, as soon as he deigned to become man, was of all men the most persecuted. After such an example, it is almost a crime to complain; let us correct our faults, and submit to tribulation as to death! An honest man can, in truth, defend himself; he even ought to do so, not for the vain satisfaction of imposing silence, but in order to render glory to the truth. I can say, then, before God who hears me, that I am a good citizen and a true Catholic; and this I say because I have always been such at heart. I have not written one page that does not breathe humanity, and I have written many pages sanctified by religion."

A true Catholic he might claim to be; it was a harmless play upon words; but when he descended to use such an expression as "the God who founded it deigning to become man," he stepped over the line that divides what may from what may not be said by such as he. True, he deceived no one. He neither expected nor designed to deceive. He meant merely to deprive the hierarchy of a weapon against himself and his order. But he went too far.

He did not get the chair, however. The Bishop of Mirepoix, as if he really did regard the forty chairs of the Academy as forty benefices, caused the vacant one to be given to a bishop of very slight claim to literary rank. "For a prelate to succeed a prelate," said Voltaire, "is according to the canons of the church." He added that, as he had not the honor to be a priest, he believed it became him to renounce the Academy.

Four chairs, as it chanced, became vacant during this year, 1743, all of which except one were given to persons of little account in the world of intellect. Maupertuis was the exception, and his distinction was not literary. One of the seats was given to Bignon, aged thirty-one years, whose sole connection with literature was this: he had inherited from his uncle the place of king's librarian. "I believe," wrote the King of Prussia, touching one of these exploits of Mirepoix, "that France is now the only country in Europe where asses and idiots can make their fortune." The king sent comic verses also upon the "forty learned paroquets, who sat upon the French Parnassus, and dreaded to let in Voltaire, lest his

flashing brilliancy should dim the trivial beauty of their twilight."

It remained, however, that Voltaire was not of the Academy; while the old imbecile Boyer, about the time of the election, added to his other fat things a benefice of eighty thousand francs a year, to which the queen appended a suite of apartments in her palace, all the world expecting his good luck to be crowned soon by a cardinal's hat.

CHAPTER XL.

VOLTAIRE AND MADAME STUDY HISTORY TOGETHER.

WHEN they first went to live at Cirey, madame was devoted to mathematics and he was collecting material for a history of the reign of Louis XIV. This was his serious work, poems and dramas being his delight, his glory, his defense. She objected to his employing time upon history. "This vixen [*bévueule*]," wrote Madame de Grafigny in 1738, "does not wish him to finish his 'History of Louis XIV.' She keeps it under lock and key. He was obliged to beg hard before she would promise to let me have it. I will baffle her little game."¹ She did baffle it so far as to get a reading of the manuscript, from which she used to copy long passages for the entertainment of her correspondent.

Voltaire confirms this anecdote, but he tells it as a lover tells the fault of a mistress. Far from styling her a *bévueule*, he speaks of her as "a person rare in her time and in all times," who had conceived a disgust for history from the manner in which it was usually written. "What matters it," she would say, "to me, a Frenchwoman, living here upon my estate, that in Sweden Egil succeeded King Haquin, and that Ottoman was the son of Ortogul? I have read with pleasure the history of the Greeks and Romans. They present to my mind grand pictures which hold my attention. But I have not been able to finish any extended history of our modern nations, in which I see little but confusion; a crowd of trifling events, without connection and without result; a thousand battles which decided nothing, and from which I only learn what weapons men used to destroy one another with. I have renounced a study equally tedious and immense, which overwhelms the mind without enlightening it."²

¹ Voltaire and Madame du Châtelet, par Madame de Grafigny, page 27.

² Essai sur les Mœurs. Préface. 19 Œuvres de Voltaire, 3.

She often spoke in this strain when something in their studies brought the subject into conversation. Sharing the general ignorance respecting the history of France, she laid the blame upon such chroniclers as the Jesuit Father Daniel, whose three ponderous folios of 1713 seemed to both of them to have been written on the principle of excluding everything of interest to thoughtful readers, and everything that could warn or enlighten patriotic statesmen. "I desired," she would say, "to read the history of France, Germany, Spain, Italy, and found a mere chaos; a heap of useless facts, for the most part false and ill digested; barbarous actions under barbarous names; insipid romances; no knowledge of manners, governments, laws, opinions, — not very extraordinary in a time when there were no opinions except monks' legends, and no laws but those of brigandage. The Middle Ages! Nothing remains of those miserable times but convents founded by the superstitious, who thought to ransom their crimes by endowing idleness. I cannot endure in Daniel those continual tales of battles, while I look for light upon the states-general, parliaments, municipal laws, chivalry, all our usages, and, above all, the progress of communities once savage and to-day civilized. I seek in Daniel the history of the great Henry the Fourth, and I find in it that of the Jesuit Coton."

Much more to the same effect he attributes to her, which was probably only his generous and brilliant interpretation of her impatient disgust.

He tells us how he met her objections. "But," he would say to her, "if among so much material, rude and unformed, you should choose wherewith to construct an edifice for your own use; if, while leaving out all the details of warfare, as wearisome as they are untrue, all the petty negotiations which have been only useless knavery, all the particular adventures which conceal the great events; if, while preserving these details which paint manners, you should form out of that chaos a general and well-defined picture; if you should seek to discover in events THE HISTORY OF THE HUMAN MIND, would you believe you had lost your time?"

This idea, he says, determined her to enter with him upon a course of historical studies; and it was upon this general

scheme of tracing the progress of civilization and the development of human intelligence that they proceeded. At first, he was surprised at the little light thrown upon his subject by the multitude of books consulted. "I remember," he adds, "that when we began to read Puffendorf, who wrote in Stockholm, and to whom the archives of the state were open, we were confident of learning from him what was the strength of that country; how many inhabitants it nourished; how the people of the province of Gothland were related to those who ravaged the Roman Empire; how in the course of time the arts were introduced into Sweden; what were its principal laws, its wealth, or rather its poverty. Not one word of what we looked for did we find. When we wished to inform ourselves concerning the claims of the emperors upon Rome, and those of the Popes against the emperors, we found only confusion and obscurity; so that upon all that I wrote I put in the margin, 'SEE, INQUIRE, DOUBT.' These words, in large letters, are still to be seen in a hundred places of my old manuscript of the year 1740. The only thing which sustained me in researches so ungrateful was what we met now and then relating to the arts and sciences. This became our principal object. It was easy to perceive that, in our ages of barbarity and ignorance, which followed the decline and division of the Roman Empire, we received almost everything from the Arabs, — astronomy, chemistry, medicine, algebra, arithmetic, geography."

For a quarter of a century, — 1730 to 1755, — with intervals, history was his chief pursuit, and the result of his labors fills fifteen of the ninety-seven volumes of his works. The "History of Charles XII." was already European, though he still labored to correct and improve it. The "History of the Reign of Louis XIV." he intended should follow that, until these conversations with Madame du Châtelet widened his view and enlarged his scheme. For some years now he had been gathering knowledge for that general history of human progress which, beginning to appear in print in 1742, was finally given to the world many years later, under the title "Essay upon the Manners and Spirit of Nations, and upon the principal Facts of History from Charlemagne to Louis XIII." The work as we now have it, in six volumes, is

most voluminous of the productions of the author, and it is, perhaps, the one which has most influenced human thought in later times. One of its pregnant little sentences is, "*Quiconque pense fait penser*" (whoever thinks makes think). I know not if there is any other work published in the last two centuries that has suggested so much to the men who suggest. If it is now obsolete, it is so for the same reason that Adam Smith's "Wealth of Nations" is obsolete, — because it has accomplished its purposes. But it remains an enduring record of the development the human mind had reached when the author wrote *finis* on the last page of his last edition in 1775. It belongs now to the same class of productions as Pliny's "Natural History," — that wondrous and fascinating cyclopædia of ancient ignorance. On both works could be inscribed: *This is what men then knew and thought of themselves and their world.*

But there is one vital difference between the ancient and the modern investigator. Aristotle told his readers that women had more teeth than men, but never thought of counting to see if the statement was correct, and never advised his disciples to do so. He wrote upon anatomy, but, as Mr. Lewes shows, could never have looked into a human body. Pliny recounts ten thousand prodigies without question, satisfied to preface them with "*They say.*" Voltaire doubts, inquires, denies, ridicules, burlesques. His Essay, besides pointing out mistakes, is a contribution toward the natural history of mistake. He pauses often, after burlesquing falsehood, to dwell upon the laws governing the generation, promulgation, duration, and extinction of falsehood; and therefore, while falling very frequently into gross error, he educated his period to surpass and supersede himself. Gibbon, Niebuhr, Bentham, Colenso, Renan, Franklin, Jefferson, Darwin, Buckle, Motley, Knight, Carlyle, and others follow out lines of investigation which he suggested, or carry on investigation in a spirit and method which he made easy. Even Carlyle's Dryasdust was pierced by Voltaire's airy shaft, before the author of "Sartor Resartus" finished him with his heavy mace, and rolled him in his own element of dust.

Take Niebuhr for another example. Voltaire found Christendom still believing the legends of Romulus and Remus, the

Horatii and Curatii, and all the other Roman marvels, just as thoughtlessly as they believed the biblical prodigies. Besides laughing at this credulity, he showed, by amusing examples, the folly of believing a story because an ancient monument attested it. "What! because young Bacchus issuing from Jupiter's thigh was celebrated in a temple at Rome, did Jupiter actually carry Bacchus in his thigh?" After several questions of this kind we have the remark, "An idiot princess built a chapel to the Eleven Thousand Virgins; the incumbent of that chapel does not doubt that the eleven thousand virgins existed, and causes the sage who does doubt it to be stoned."

In Grote, also, the Greek legends are subjected to the same process; and Mr. Grote, improving upon the Voltairean method, relates the beautiful legends *as* legends, and through them gropes his way to the point where it is possible to begin history. Dr. Arnold pursues the same method in his "History of Rome."

Gibbon is another instance. Both for the method and the spirit of the "Decline and Fall" Gibbon was much indebted to this Essay; but especially for the spirit. Solid Gibbon could not catch Voltaire's lightness and brilliancy, or he, too, would have described Julian as a man "who had the misfortune to abandon the Christian religion, but did much honor to the religion of nature, — Julian, the scandal of our church and the glory of the Roman Empire." Gibbon's fifteenth and sixteenth chapters are wholly in the spirit of this Essay, though weightier in manner, and the result of wider investigation.

Bishop Colenso's arithmetical test applied to the Hebrew narratives was very freely used by Voltaire in the Essay, as well as in other works, accompanying the same with a profusion of exquisite mockery. The line of investigation pursued by M. Renan is in harmony with the spirit of the work, and was made possible by it.

The author most indebted to Voltaire was Henry Thomas Buckle, who died in attempting, with all the modern accumulations of knowledge, to do what Voltaire essayed with the scanty materials accessible in his day. Buckle's "History of Civilization," if the gifted and devoted author had lived to complete it, could have been little more than an amplification

and rectification of Voltaire's Essay. Even in the form, Buckle followed his model; for Voltaire too has an "Introduction" of extraordinary length, — nearly a volume. We are reminded of the English author in a hundred places of Voltaire's "Introduction:" as when we read, for example, of the controlling influence of climate in developing civilization; that civilization began with leisure, and cannot thrive without it; that the immensities of nature limited the population of America; that religion retards and knowledge promotes development; that the "aspects of nature," when they are terrible, make men more superstitious, and when they are benign make them less so; that such works as the pyramids prove the builders to have been poor and servile; that ignorance and fear are the allied causes of all that is most deplorable in the history of man; and that the beginning of all progress is the increase of knowledge.

He anticipates, also, those investigators who trace the gradual development of such doctrines as the real presence and miraculous inspiration, as well as the gradual construction of such modes of worship as the Catholic mass. On this line, he displays all his knowledge, acuteness, humor, and audacity. The infinite absurdities of the early church history, such as tracing the papacy to St. Peter, who never saw Rome, give him matter for many entertaining and effective pages. The awful power wielded for so many ages by the Ring of small-brained, greedy Italians who governed the church from Rome, and debauched both the mind and morals of Europe, received due recognition at his hands. He sums it all up in one sentence of terrible truth: —

"You will observe," he says, as if addressing Madame du Châtelet, "that in all the disputes which have inflamed Christians against one another since the birth of the church, Rome has always decided for the opinion that most degraded the human mind and most completely annihilated human reason."

Having made this powerful statement, he appends a jest: "I speak here only of history; leaving out of view the inspiration of the church and its infallibility, with which history has nothing to do." It was this mingling of weighty truth with amusing mockery that rendered the Essay the only historical work in six volumes which readers for pleasure were likely to read through.

If the merits of this work are immense, so also are the deductions which modern readers are obliged to make from former estimates. Its defects are due in part to the impossibility of procuring at that time the requisite knowledge, and in part to the narrow limits of the human mind, and to the dominating antipathies of Voltaire. Instead of expanding upon these defects, I will quote one passage which exhibits them, — a passage which American readers can judge better than others. In his last volume, he comes to speak of the colonies in North America, and he selects Pennsylvania and New England, among others, for particular remark. The reader will observe the extreme, even ludicrous, incorrectness of his information, as well as the influence of his early liking for the Quakers and his life-long aversion to Calvinism: —

“ Pennsylvania [he says] was long without soldiers, and it is only of late that England sent some troops to defend them, when they were at war with France. Take away that name of Quaker, cure them of their revolting and barbarous habit of trembling when they speak in their religious meetings, abolish some other ridiculous customs, and we must agree that those primitive people are of all men worthiest of respect. Their colony is as flourishing as their morals have been pure. Philadelphia, or the City of the Brothers, their capital, is one of the most beautiful cities in the universe; and they reckon that, in 1740, there were a hundred and eighty thousand men in Pennsylvania. These new citizens are not all primitives or Quakers; half of them are Germans, Swedes, and people of other countries, who form seventeen religions. The primitives, who govern, regard all those strangers as their brothers.

“ Beyond that province, the only one upon earth to which peace has fled, banished as it is from every other region, you come to New England, of which Boston, the richest city of all that coast, is the capital.

“ It was inhabited and first governed by Puritans, persecuted in England by Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury, who afterwards paid for his persecutions with his head, and whose scaffold served to raise that of the king, Charles I. Those Puritans, a species of Calvinists, fled, about the year 1620, into that country, since named New England. If the Episcopalians pursued them in the Old World, it was a war of tigers against bears. They carried to America their sombre and ferocious humor, and vexed in every way the peaceful Pennsylvanians, as soon as those new-comers had established themselves. But, in 1692, the Puritans were self-punished by the strangest epidemic that ever attacked the human mind.

“While Europe was beginning to escape from the abyss of horrible superstitions wherein ignorance had plunged it for so many ages, and while sorcery and possession were, in England and other polite nations, only regarded as ancient follies, at which they blushed, the Puritans gave them new life in America. A girl had convulsions in 1692; a preacher accused an old female servant; they forced the old woman to confess that she was a witch. Half the inhabitants believed they were possessed; the other half were accused of sorcery; and the people in fury threatened all the judges with hanging if they did not hang the accused. For two years nothing was seen but sorcerers, possessed, and gibbets; and it was the countrymen of Locke and Newton who abandoned themselves to that abominable delusion. At last the malady ceased; the citizens of New England recovered their reason, and were astonished at their own madness. They devoted themselves to commerce and agriculture. The colony very soon became the most flourishing of them all. They reckoned there, in 1750, about three hundred and fifty thousand inhabitants, which is ten times more than the estimated population of the French establishments.

“From New England you pass to New York; to Acadia, which has become so great a cause of discord; to New Land, where is carried on the great cod fishery.”¹

This is highly diverting, and shows how difficult it is for a human mind to get to the limpid water at the bottom of the well where Truth resides. Defective information and a biased mind, — these are the reasons why each generation has to re-write for itself the history of the world. He attributes the Reformation to a squabble of two rival orders of monks, as to which of them should have the German agency for the sale of indulgences. Calvin, of course, he cordially and justly detests. To Luther he is more lenient. He approves Luther's marriage, commends his good-humor, and signalizes the fact that, ecclesiastic and controversialist as he was, he never committed a cruel action, — not even burnt a Unitarian. “Despite the theologic fury that reigns in his works, he was a good man at home, frank in character and peaceful in social intercourse. His hatred of the sacramentarians limited itself to expelling them from the universities and the ministry; a very moderate thing for the age in which he lived.” On the other hand, he did not perceive, living in a Catholic country, that the Reformation was a step *toward* the emancipation of

¹ 6 Essai sur les Mœurs, 124.

the mind from the bondage of the letter. He saw that the writings of the reformers were silly and savage; he knew that their demeanor was austere and forbidding; and he supposed that, in removing the heavy yoke of the old church, they had imposed one more crushing still.

"If," he remarks, "the reformers condemned celibacy, if they opened the doors of the convents, it was to change human society itself into convents. Sports and plays were forbidden among them. Geneva, for a hundred years, did not allow a musical instrument within its borders. They proscribed auricular confession, but they wished public penitence; and so it was established in Switzerland, Scotland, Geneva. We succeed little with men when we propose something easy and simple. The strictest school-master is the one most run after."

In relating the horrors of religion in every age, he still blends pathos and fun; lamenting the woes unutterable that zealots have inflicted for religion's sake, and yet never allowing his readers to forget the trivial and ridiculous nature of the usages and doctrines for which they slew and tortured. He sometimes makes the mistake that we are all apt to make in commenting upon those scenes of blood and devastation, in Spain, in Holland, in Florida, in France, attributing them too much to individuals, and too little to man. People were dismal in Geneva and cruel in Spain, not because Calvin was dyspeptic and Philip II. ambitious, but because man was still weak, ignorant, and timorous. He, too, felt this when, after relating the appalling massacres that followed the surrender of Haarlem, he adds only, "The pen drops from the hands when we see how men are wont to deal with men." He felt it, also, and gave it memorable expression, when he wrote, "It is characteristic of barbarians to believe the divinity malevolent. Men make God in their own image."

Such were the studies that occupied him during these years of wandering and disturbance; cheered occasionally by the warm commendations of the King of Prussia, to whom he sent the portions as they were completed. Frederic praised this work without reserve. He pronounced it the ornament of the age, sufficient of itself to show how much superior modern genius was to ancient. For a wonder, he did not object to its audacities. "Cicero," said the king, "could not conceive how

the augurs could look one another in the face without laughing; you do more: you expose the absurdities and furies of the clergy to the view of all the world." Again, on reading Voltaire's account of the crusades, the king broke into poetry, congratulating himself upon being Voltaire's contemporary, to be instructed by him, instead of being a crusader, to be pierced by his satire. "Go on with this excellent work," he added; "go on with it for the love of truth; go on for the happiness of men. It is a king who exhorts you to write the follies of kings." Frederic was, indeed, so roused by it that he resumed his own literary labors, wrote a poem and a comedy, and began to compose those Memoirs of his house and time which occupy six of the thirty volumes of his works.

The "History of the Age of Louis XIV." was not neglected, meanwhile. The author's familiar intercourse with the men and women whose parents and connections had lived at the old court supplied him with documents and memoirs. To the polite society of his time no other work of his could have been so fascinating as this *mélange* of anecdote, epigram, and history. He "stands by his order." Half his first volume consists of a catalogue, with brief explanations, of the principal writers of the time of the late king, among whom, with his usual tenacious loyalty, he includes "Châtelet (Gabrielle-Emilie Le Tonnelier de Breteuil, Marquise du)" who was nine years of age when Louis XIV. died. She was dead herself when he added that, "of all the women who had illustrated France, she was the one who had possessed most of genuine *esprit*, and had least affected the *bel-esprit*." The History is so much occupied with matters appertaining to the mind and the taste that it reminds us of the amiable Philadelphian who proposed the "History of the United States with the Wars omitted."

He could not, for many reasons, speak of the late king with perfect candor. He was himself somewhat under the influence of the general illusion with regard to Louis XIV.; and the more because the redeeming glory of his reign was the encouragement given to art and literature. Nor had the colossal egotism of the monarch been clearly revealed to the world, though it had brought France close to the verge of ruin, and left to his successor the chaos of 1715. The Memoirs of Saint Simon, of Madame de Maintenon, and many

others enable us to know that court better than any individual could have known it who spent a life in attendance. Voltaire knew more than he could tell, and he "manages" the dangerous points of his theme with all his own audacious prudence. The anecdotes are a valuable part of his work, and these will make it always a source of information. "Anecdotes," he says, "are an inclosed field in which one gleans after the vast harvest of history." Most of those which he has recorded have become part of the common stock of entertainment and illustration, used by each generation as it passes, and left intact for the next. The spirit of the work is Voltairian enough. In other words, it is a solicitation, in three agreeable volumes, to the world of readers, to think with their own minds, to believe only what is in harmony with the known nature of things, and, having done this themselves, to concede the same right to all men without reserve. The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes he adduced as a case in point. How often during his long life he returned to this theme! He reminded his countrymen, on every convenient opportunity, that the priests who ruled the ignorant mind of Louis XIV. drove from the kingdom eight hundred thousand people, moral, skillful, frugal, loyal, who carried away with them a thousand millions of francs, and planted in Holland, England, Germany, America, several branches of manufacture of which till then France had enjoyed a monopoly. He told his countrymen of the great colonies of Frenchmen that he had himself seen in Berlin, London, Switzerland, Holland, — the descendants of those good people who had followed their pastors into exile, rather than renounce their right to believe. On this point he was called in question, and met his opponent with accounts of these foreign settlements as visited and inspected by himself.

He concluded the History with a narrative of the persistent endeavor on the part of the Jesuits, under Louis XIV., to convert the Chinese. The missionaries sent home a pious lie to inflame the zeal and swell the offerings of the people of France. Four crosses had appeared, they said, on the clouds near the horizon, as if to sanction the sublime enterprise. Voltaire ended his History thus: "But if God had wished that China should become Christian, would he have contented himself with putting some crosses in the air? Would he not have put them in the heart of the Chinese?"

CHAPTER XLI.

AMATEUR DIPLOMATIST AGAIN.

THESE elevated studies were never so frequently or so long interrupted as during the next two or three years,—a period of his life to which he always looked back with regret. When he was an old man, the Abbé Duvernet asked him if it was true that he had once been a courtier. He replied that it was all too true. “In 1744 and 1745,” he added, “I was one; I corrected myself in 1746; and I repented in 1747.” He understated the misfortune. From 1743 to 1753 he passed a great part of his time at or near the courts of his three kings, Louis, Frederic, and Stanislas, snatching his own proper work from tumultuous distraction. “It was not the period of my glory,” said he, “if I ever had any.”¹

There was a grand wedding at Paris, in the family of the Du Châtelets, in the spring of 1743. Madame du Châtelet gave her daughter to a Neapolitan, the Duke de Montenero-Caraff. It appears to have been a veritable marriage of the good old time: the bride a plump damsel of seventeen, fresh from the convent; the bridegroom much older, a foreigner, as Voltaire notes, “with a big nose, a meagre visage, and a hollow chest.” But the King of France signed the contract; the King of Prussia was formally notified; and all was done in the rules. The mother had had other wishes for this daughter; at least, she said so in her letter announcing the marriage to the King of Prussia. “If *my* vows had been heard,” she wrote, “it had been at your court that she had passed her life; and that would have been a happiness of which I should have been jealous.” Could the young Baron de Kaiserling have aspired? The young lady had been brought home from her convent to take part in a comedy performed for his amusement at Cirey.

¹ Voltaire to Duvernet, February, 1776.

Weightier matters called Voltaire from his books in June, 1743, and detained him long. Europe was still embroiled. Frederic, who had broken the peace in 1740, had withdrawn from the strife, with Silesia his own. He was at peace; but France was waging disastrous, discreditable war against Austria and Hanover, a war without well-defined object, and woefully ill conducted. Again all eyes were fixed in hope or dread upon Prussia, whose alliance could turn the scale and give to either belligerent decisive preponderance. It was Frederic himself who seemed to invite Voltaire to try once more his skill in the diplomatic art. "I now ask you," wrote Frederic, "for a new explanation; for, behold, the cardinal is dead and affairs are going a different way. It were good to know what are the channels which it is necessary to employ."

The Duke de Richelieu was then "first gentleman of the king's bed-chamber," an office which he fulfilled by supplying that sumptuous apartment with occupants agreeable to the king, and useful to himself. The Duchess de Châteauroux was one of them. Petticoat II. she was styled by a King of Prussia, indifferent to women. Richelieu conceived the scheme of sending Voltaire to Berlin on a secret mission to sound the King of Prussia, to warn him of the danger to himself of allowing Maria Theresa to recover power and prestige through the aid of the King of Hanover, who was also King of England, and to win him over to an alliance with France; or, as Voltaire expressed it, "to ask him if he would be so good as to lend us a hundred thousand men, for the nonce, in order the better to assure his Silesia." The mistress seconded, the ministry adopted, the king sanctioned the project, and he prepared to depart.

A pretext being necessary to account for his presence at Berlin, he suggested his recent public quarrel with the ancient Bishop of Mirepoix, which also the king approved. The new envoy wrote to Frederic that he was about to seek refuge at his court from the persecutions of "that bigoted old monk." Boyer was accustomed to sign himself, officially, the "*anc.* Bishop of Mirepoix." The abbreviation *anc.* in the bad handwriting of the bishop bore a resemblance to the French word *ane*, which means ass. Voltaire and Frederic styled him habitually *l'ane de Mirepoix*, and made merry at his ex-

pense. Voltaire took care that the bishop should see some of the king's letters in which liberties of this kind were taken with his name and character. Boyer complained to the King of France that Voltaire was giving him out in foreign courts as a fool. Louis replied, as Voltaire reports, that "it was *a thing agreed upon*, and that he need not concern himself about it." Thus, he adds, he had the pleasure, at once, of avenging the indignity of his exclusion from the Academy, of taking an agreeable journey, and of having an opportunity to serve his king; all, too, at the king's expense, for he was authorized to spend as much money as he wished.

But how was he to get away from Madame du Châtelet, who would make "a horrible outcry" at this appearance of desertion? It was agreed that she should be let into the secret, and that the letters between Voltaire and the ministry should pass through her hands. She made the outcry, notwithstanding; but she made it with discretion and with histrionic effects. Voltaire took leave of her about June 15, 1743, to be gone six weeks; and she performed her part so well that the gossiping Barbier was deceived by it. July 1st, he made this entry in his diary: "Madame du Châtelet is going immediately to join Voltaire at Brussels. It is remarked that the government ought to conciliate this poet, or else assure itself of him. He is extremely dissatisfied, extremely angry, and in great favor with the King of Prussia. That woman passed a part of Saturday last in crying, because she had not received on Friday any letters from that Adonis."¹ From this we may infer that the purpose of the journey was not suspected.

Before leaving Paris he procured from his old school-fellow, the Marquis d'Argenson, minister of war, a contract for his relations, Marchand and son, for making ten thousand army coats. "All they ask," said he, "is to clothe and feed the defenders of France." Marchand lived to be a farmer-general. For another nephew, badly wounded in a recent action, he solicited "that cross of St. Louis, for which men have their arms and legs broken." For Madame du Châtelet, also, he obtained something, not stated, from the same minister. "Permit me, Monseigneur," he writes to D'Argenson from the Hague, "to thank you tenderly for the favor accorded to

¹ 8 Journal de Barbier, 309.

Madame du Châtelet, and for the manner of it." He was in great vogue; for the first news he had to remark upon in his letters to the minister was of the famous victory won over the French at Dettingen by George II.'s English and Hanoverian troops, — that army of Uncle Toby's which swore so terribly in Flanders. Nothing was too good for the envoy who might win for France at such a crisis so powerful an ally as Frederic II., King of Prussia. The envoy improved his hour of sunshine.

From the light tone in which he wrote of his mission, years after, we might suppose that it was all a jest at the expense of *l'ane de Mirepoix*. His letters of the time, however, show that he was a vigilant, laborious, and able amateur in the diplomatic art, with the usual fault of the amateur, excess of zeal. He sent home an abundance of documents, maps, plans, and information, supplied by and through Frederic's agents and ministers. He dispatched couriers; he sent unsigned letters; he wound himself up in impenetrable secrecy, and behaved, in all respects, in the approved diplomatic style. But he did more than this. Living for six weeks in Prussia, in the royal palaces, in daily and nightly intimacy with the king, he had with him long and serious conversations, in the course of which Frederic spoke with apparent candor and fullness of his intentions and desires. Voltaire reports one of these conversations to M. Amelot, French minister for foreign affairs. It occurred September 3, 1743, in Voltaire's own room, after a dinner given by the king to M. de Valori, the French ambassador at Berlin. The gayety and ease of a Paris table marked this repast, and, when it was over, the king came to Voltaire's apartment, and they talked alone together until the evening concert was announced.

THE KING. — "I was very glad yesterday to invite the envoy of France alone of all the ministers, not only to give him marks of consideration, but to disquiet those who would be displeased at the preference."

VOLTAIRE. — "The envoy of France would be much more content if your majesty should send some troops to Wesel or to Magdeburg."

THE KING. — "But what do you wish me to do? Will the King of France ever forgive my having made a separate peace?"

VOLTAIRE. — "Sire, great kings know not vengeance; all yields to

the interest of the state. You know if the interest of your majesty and that of France is not to be forever united."

THE KING. — "How can I believe that it is the intention of France to bind herself firmly to me? I know that your envoy at Mayence makes insinuations against my interests, and that a peace is proposed with the Queen of Hungary, involving the reëstablishment of the emperor and an indemnification at my expense."

VOLTAIRE. — "I dare believe that this accusation is an artifice of the Austrians, a practice too common with them. Did they not calumniate you in the same manner last May? Did they not publish in Holland that you had made an offer to the Queen of Hungary to join her against France?"

THE KING (lowering his eyes). — "I swear to you that nothing is more false. What could I gain by it? Such a falsehood destroys itself."

VOLTAIRE. — "Very well, sire; why, then, not openly unite with France and the emperor against the common enemy, who hates you and calumniates you both equally? What ally can you have but France?"

THE KING. — "You are right. You know, also, that I am endeavoring to serve France; you are aware of what I am doing in Holland. But I cannot act openly until I am sure of being seconded by the empire, to which end I am now laboring; and this is the real object of the journey I shall make to Bayreuth in eight or ten days. I wish to be assured that some, at least, of the princes of the empire — such as Palatine, Hesse, Wurtemberg, Cologne, and Stettin — would furnish a contingent to the emperor."

VOLTAIRE. — "Sire, ask their signature only, and begin by making your brave Prussians take the field."

THE KING. — "I do not wish to recommence the war; but I confess I should be flattered to be the pacificator of the empire, and to humiliate a little the King of England, who wishes to give law to Germany."

VOLTAIRE. — "You can do it. Only this glory is wanting to you, and I hope that France will owe peace to her own arms and your negotiations. The vigor she will show will doubtless increase your goodwill. Allow me to ask what you would do if the King of France should demand succor from you by virtue of your treaty with him?"

THE KING. — "I should be obliged to excuse myself, and to reply that the treaty was annulled by what I have since done with regard to the Queen of Hungary. At present I can serve the emperor and the King of France only by negotiating."

VOLTAIRE. — "Negotiate, then, sire, as fortunately as you have

fought ; and suffer me to say to you, what all the earth says, that the Queen of Hungary only awaits the favorable moment to attack Silesia.”

THE KING. — “ My four fortresses will be finished before Austria can send against me two regiments. I have a hundred and fifty thousand combatants ; I shall have then two hundred thousand. I flatter myself that my system of military discipline, which I consider the best in Europe, will always triumph over the Hungarian troops. If the Queen of Hungary attempts to recover Silesia, she will force me to take Bohemia from her. I fear nothing from Russia ; the Czarina is forever devoted to me since the last conspiracy fomented by Botta [envoy of Maria Theresa] and by the English. I advise her to send the young Ivan and his mother to Siberia, as well as my brother-in-law, with whom I have always been dissatisfied, and who has always been governed by the Austrians.”¹

At this point the king was notified that the musicians were ready to begin the concert. Voltaire followed him to the music-room, and the conversation ended ; to be renewed, however, on several succeeding days. The king could scarcely have been more explicit or more frank ; and, probably, an experienced diplomatist would not have pressed him farther. But Voltaire had private as well as public reasons for making of this embassy an unquestionable and striking success. He desired something in the king’s handwriting to take home with him ; and, to this end, he wrote the well-known series of questions, leaving a wide margin on the paper for the king’s written comments. Frederic, obliged to disappoint the pertinacious envoy, appended ridiculous or evasive answers. “ Is it not clear,” asked Voltaire, “ that France displays vigor and wisdom ? ” The king wrote in the margin, “ I admire the wisdom of France, but God keep me from ever imitating it.” Voltaire alluded to the burning desire of the Austrians to attack Silesia. Frederic wrote, “ They will be received, *biribi*, in the style of Barbary, *mon ami!*” The king would not commit himself upon paper. In conversation he continued to discuss the situation in a manner which his subsequent conduct showed to be sincere. Their final conversation turned upon King George II. of England, whom Frederic did not love. The king’s last word was this : —

¹ Voltaire to Amclot, September 3, 1743.

“George is Frederic’s uncle; but George is not King of Prussia. Let France declare war against England, and I march!”¹

To oblige the envoy, the king wrote him a long letter to *show*, eulogizing France, complimenting her king, and commending Voltaire as a loyal subject and admirable citizen. Frederic still longed to possess him; and it is evident from scattered intimations that the envoy endeavored to turn this passionate desire to account. I think he said in substance to the King of Prussia, “Let me be the means of bringing succor to France, make my mission brilliantly successful, and what can I not ask of the king, *mon maître*? Say, for example, that I should wish the obliging Marquis du Châtelet appointed ambassador at your majesty’s court, with one Voltaire as guest of the family, resident at Berlin for many years, and perhaps always!” Frederic, on his part, renewed all his former offers. “France,” he wrote, a few days before Voltaire’s departure, “has passed hitherto for the asylum of unfortunate kings; I wish my capital to become the temple of great men. Come, my dear Voltaire, and dictate all that can be agreeable to you. I wish to give you pleasure; and to oblige a man it is necessary to enter into his way of thinking. Choose a suite of apartments or a house; rule whatever is necessary to you for the agreeableness and the luxury of life; make your condition such as your happiness requires; it shall be mine to provide for the rest. You shall be always free and entirely master of your destiny.”

In his mania to have him, the king descended to a trick which, doubtless, he regarded as a kind of harmless practical joke, but which few readers will be able to see in that light. Voltaire, as we have observed, caused some of Frederic’s letters to fall into the hands of the Bishop of Mirepoix. Before leaving Prussia, he discovered that the king was taking precisely the same liberty with certain letters of his, in which the “mitred donkey of Mirepoix” was spoken of with infinite contempt. “Here,” wrote Frederic, August 17, 1743, to his favorite, Count de Rottembourg, then visiting Paris, — “you have a morsel of a letter of Voltaire’s, which I beg you will get delivered to the Bishop of Mirepoix in some roundabout way,

¹ Mémoires. 2 Œuvres de Voltaire, 56.

without either you or me appearing in the business. My intention is to embroil Voltaire so thoroughly in France that there will remain no part for him to take but to come to me."¹ The morsel inclosed read thus:—

“ This ugly Mirepoix is as hard, as fanatical, as imperious, as the Cardinal de Fleury was suave, accommodating, polite. Oh, how he will make that good man regretted ! ”

Ten days later, the king sent to Count de Rottembourg some verses of Voltaire's upon Mirepoix, and charged him to get them secretly delivered to the bishop; for, added the king, “ I wish to embroil Voltaire forever with France; it would be the means of having him at Berlin.” These verses, besides heaping contempt upon Mirepoix, contained a line that seemed to speak of Louis XV. as “ the most stupid of kings.” This was going far, even for a monarch. Voltaire, who had partisans or friends everywhere, was promptly informed of this procedure, and did not approve it. He was extremely indignant. If he had amused himself a little by putting some jocular paragraphs of Frederic where the bishop could see them, he did not consider the game equal between a king with two hundred thousand men at his command and a poet who was obliged always to serve and charm his country at the risk of a dungeon. Strange to relate, Frederic was *astonished* that he should take the flattering treason amiss. “ Voltaire,” he wrote to Rottembourg, “ has unearthed, I know not how, the *little* treason we have played him. He is *strangely* piqued at it. He will get over it, I hope.”

He pouted for a while, it appears, and then forgave the little treason. Luckily, it had been a thing agreed upon that Mirepoix was to be “ written down an ass ; ” and thus he was able to make it up with his own court. Nor was he ill pleased to let the French ministry know how intensely he was desired at the Prussian court. “ Not being able,” he wrote to M. Amelot, “ to gain me otherwise, the king thought to acquire me by destroying me in France; but I swear to you that I would rather live in a town of Switzerland than enjoy at this price the perilous favor of a man capable of putting treason into friendship itself.”

But he was not quite so angry then as these words imply.

¹ 25 Œuvres de Frédéric le Grand, 523, 525, 527, 528.

He brought his Prussian journey to a happy close by accompanying the king to the court of his sister, the Margravine of Bayreuth, where he passed fourteen days of sumptuous and elegant festivity. Operas, comedies, concerts, hunts, suppers, filled up the hours. The king's sisters, Ulrique and Amelia, as well as Wilhelmina, were there, all sharing their brother's enthusiasm for the guest, all owing part of their mental development to him. Voltaire had never been so fêted and caressed. He left behind him at Bayreuth, as a memorial of those enchanting days, three little poems, unequaled in their kind in all the literature of the drawing-room. These trifles are so exquisite that the plainest prose of them leaves a pleasing impression upon the mind:—

“To the Princess Ulrique: Often a little truth mingles with the grossest falsehood. Last night, in the error of a dream, to the rank of kings I was mounted. I loved you, princess, and dared tell you so. The gods, at my waking, did not take all from me. I have lost only my empire.”

“To the Princesses Ulrique and Amelia: If Paris should come upon the earth to judge between your beautiful eyes, he would cut the apple in two, and not cause any war.”

“To the Princesses Ulrique, Amelia, and Wilhelmina: Pardon, charming Ulrique! pardon, beautiful Amelia! I had thought to love only you for the rest of my life, and to serve only under your laws; but, at length, I hear and I see that adorable sister upon whose steps Love follows. Ah, it is not wronging the Three Graces to love all three of them!”

The Princess Ulrique ventured to send him a reply in verse and prose. She, too, had had a dream: “Apollo, with majestic port, gentle and gracious, accompanied by his Nine Sisters,” appeared before her, to rebuke her for replying to such verses only in dull prose. The god dictated; she wrote: *His* dream had been a mere delusion; it was *Emilie* who had appeared to him, not Ulrique; and so he would discover as soon as he had returned to Brussels. What a difference between Ulrique and them! They had placed *themselves* on the heights of Helicon; they had made *themselves* famous; but she owed all to her ancestors. In this tone Voltaire and the princess continued to correspond until she went away to be Queen of Sweden.

After four months' absence, he set his face toward home,

bearing with him many evidences of the favor in which he was held; among others, a gold box from the king, in which were several medals in gold, representing Frederic giving peace to his subjects. Long as he had been absent, still he lingered several days at the court of the Duke of Brunswick, writing few letters and short to that Emilie of his, who was chafing and anxious at Brussels. She wrote to D'Argental that she no longer knew the man upon whom her happiness depended. His letters and his behavior were equally strange to her. "He is absolutely drunk; he spends twelve days in going from Berlin to the Hague; he is mad for Germany and courts; he stayed fifteen days at Bayreuth; he has passed fifteen days without writing to me; and for two months past I have learned his designs from ambassadors and gazettes. Such conduct would, perhaps, detach any one but me." But the truant returned at length, and all was forgiven. He had had a painful journey, he said, but his return overwhelmed him with happiness; he had never found his Emilie so amiable and so far above the King of Prussia.

Soon they went to Paris together; he to give details of his mission, and to receive, perhaps, the glory and reward which kings bestow upon subjects returning from hard and not unsuccessful service. But he did not receive either glory or reward. The Duchess de Châteauroux was offended because the negotiation had not passed through her hands; she had taken a dislike to the person of M. Amelot, minister for foreign affairs, because he stammered; she detested him, also, because he was controlled by M. de Maurepas, her mortal foe; and, when Voltaire reached Paris, she was in full intrigue to expel the odious stammerer. A few weeks later, M. Amelot was dismissed, and Voltaire was "enveloped in his disfavor."

After a month's stay at Paris, madame and himself returned to Brussels, where they resumed their lawsuit and their studies, after seven months' interruption. On the opening of spring they were at Cirey, its new gardens all blooming with the beauty which their taste had imagined. Few visitors enlivened this retreat, it is true, but they thought, perhaps, that they were now settled for a long period of generous toil and elegant pleasure. President Hénault looked in upon them again in the spring of 1744, and found them immersed in intellectual

employments, with madame's new tutor in mathematics their only companion. "If," wrote Hénault, in his *Memoirs*, "one should make a fancy picture of a delicious retreat, an asylum of peace, of union, of calm of soul, of amenity, of talents, of mutual esteem, of the attractions of philosophy joined to the charms of poetry, he would have painted Cirey: a building simple and elegant from the ground-floor up; cabinets filled with the apparatus of mechanics and chemistry; Voltaire in bed, beginning, continuing, finishing works of all kinds."

CHAPTER XLII.

VOLTAIRE AT THE COURT OF FRANCE.

AFTER this interesting experience of court life in a foreign country, where the king was king, he was to become a courtier at Versailles, where the man who governed the king's mistress was king.

Again it was the Duke de Richelieu, First Gentleman of the Chamber, who broke in upon the elevated pursuits of Cirey, and called him to lower tasks and less congenial scenes. The royal children were coming of age. The marriage of the Dauphin to the Infanta of Spain, long ago agreed upon, was soon to be celebrated, the prince having passed his sixteenth year, and it devolved upon the First Gentleman to arrange the marriage festival. This was no light task; for Louis XIV. had accustomed France to the most elaborate and magnificent *fêtes*. Not content with such splendors as mere wealth can everywhere procure, that gorgeous monarch loved to enlist all the arts and all the talents, exhibiting to his guests diversions written by Molière, performed with original music, and with scenery painted by artists. Several of his festivals have to this day a certain celebrity in France, and have left traces still noticeable. There is a public ground in Paris, opposite the Tuileries, which is called the Place of the Carrousal. It was so named because it was the scene of one of this king's *fêtes*, in which five bodies of horsemen, or quadrilles, as they were called, took part. One of these bodies were dressed and equipped as Roman knights, and they were led by the king in person. His brother, the Duke of Orleans, commanded a body of Persian cavalry; the Prince of Condé, a splendid band of Turks; the Duke of Guise, a company of Peruvian horse; and a son of Condé shone at the head of East Indian horsemen in gorgeous array. Imagine these five bodies of horse galloping and manœuvring, entering and de-

parting, charging and retreating, like circus riders in an extremely large and splendid tent; and in the midst, on a lofty platform, three queens in splendid robes, the mother of Louis, the wife of Louis, and the widow of Charles I., who lived and died the guest of the King of France. There were grand doings at this festival. There were tournaments, games of skill and daring, stately processions, concerts, plays, and buffooneries, with a ball at the close.

That pageant, splendid as it was, was "effaced," as the French say, by one which the king gave only two years after at Versailles, probably the most sumptuous thing of the kind ever seen. On the 5th of May, the most beautiful month of the year in France, the king rode out to Versailles with all his court, which then included six hundred persons, each attended by retainers and servants, the whole numbering more than two thousand individuals and as many horses. The festival was to last seven days, and the king defrayed the expenses of every one of his guests. In the park and gardens of Versailles miracles had been wrought. Theatres, amphitheatres, porticoes, pavilions, seemed to have sprung into being at the waving of an enchanter's wand. On the first day there was a kind of review, or march-past, of all who were to take part in the games and tourneys. Under a triumphal arch the three queens appeared again, resplendent, each attended by one hundred ladies, who were attired in the brilliant manner of the period; past these marched heralds pages, squires, carrying the devices and shields of the knights, as well as banners upon which verses were written in letters of gold. The knights followed, in burnished armor and bright plumes, the king at their head in the character of Roger, a famous knight of old. All the crown diamonds glittered upon his coat and the trappings of his horse. Both he and the animal sparkled and blazed in the May sun; and we can well imagine that a handsome young man, riding with perfect grace the most beautiful of horses, must have been a very pretty spectacle, despite so much glitter. When this procession of squires and knights had passed and made their obeisance to the queens, a huge car followed, eighteen feet high, fifteen wide, and twenty-four long, representing the Car of the Sun,—an immense vehicle, all gilding and splendor. Behind this car

came groups exhibiting the Four Ages, of Gold, of Silver, of Brass, and of Iron; and these were followed by representations of the celestial signs, the seasons, and the hours. All this, the spectators inform us, was admirably performed to the sound of beautiful music; and, now and then, persons would step from the procession, and the music would cease, while they recited poems, written for the occasion, before the queens. Imagine shepherds, blacksmiths, farmers, harvesters, vine-dressers, fawns, dryads, Pans, Dianas, Apollos, marching by, and representing the various scenes of life and industry!

The procession ends at last. Night falls. With wondrous rapidity four thousand great torches are lighted in an inclosure fitted up as a banqueting place. Two hundred of the persons who had figured in the procession now bring in various articles of food: the seasons, the vine-dressers, the shepherds, the harvesters, each bear the food appropriate to them; while Pan and Diana advance upon a moving mountain, and alight to superintend the distribution of the exquisite food which had been brought in. Behind the tables was an orchestra of musicians, and when the feast was done the pleasures of the day ended with a ball. For a whole week the festival continued, the sports varied every day. There were tourneys, pageants, hunts, shooting at a mark, and spearing the ring. Four times the king gained the prize, and offered it to be competed for again. There were a great number of court fools at this festival, as we still find clowns at a circus. Indeed, when we attend a liberally appointed circus we are looking upon a show resembling in many particulars the grand doings in the park of Versailles when Louis XIV. entertained his court and figured as chief of the riders.

Most of the performances could have been procured by money lavishly spent; and, in order to reproduce them, the Duke de Richelieu needed little assistance from the arts. But there were items of the programme which redeemed the character of this festival, and caused it to be remembered by the susceptible people of France with pride. Molière composed for it a kind of show play, called the "Princesse d'Elide," a vehicle for music, ballet, and costume, with here and there a spice of his comic talent. A farce of his, the "Forced Marriage," was also played; and the first three acts of his "Tar-

tuffe," the greatest effort of French dramatic genius in that age, if not in any age, were performed for the first time. There was only one man in France who could help a "First Gentleman" to features of the coming *fête* at all resembling these; and to him that First Gentleman applied. Voltaire entered into the scheme with zeal. In April, 1744, Cirey all blooming with flowers and verdure, he began to write his festive divertissement, the "Princesse de Navarre," the hero of which was a kind of Spanish Duke de Richelieu. "I am making," he wrote, "a divertissement for a Dauphin and Dauphiness whom I shall not divert; but I wish to produce something pretty, gay, tender, worthy of the Duke de Richelieu, director of the *fête*." It was his chief summer work, and he labored at it with an assiduity that would have sufficed to produce three new tragedies. He very happily laid the scene of his play in an ancient château close to the borders of the Spanish province of Navarre, — an expedient which enabled him to group upon the stage both Frenchmen and Spaniards, with their effective contrasts of costume, and to present to the Spanish bride and her court pleasing traits of their own countrymen. The poet and the First Gentleman arranged the processions, the ballets, the tableaux, the *fête* within a *fête*; exchanging many long letters, and pondering many devices. There is good comic writing in this piece; and there are two characters, a rustic Spanish baron and his extremely simple-minded daughter, that are worthy of a better kind of play and occasion.

This was the year in which the King of France first braved the hardships of the field, accompanied by his mistress, the Duchess de Châteauroux, and attended by that surprising retinue of courtiers and comedians, often described. I need not pause to relate how, after being present at warlike operations, he fell dangerously sick of a fever; how the mistress and the First Gentleman took possession of the king's quarters, and barred the door against priests and princes; how, as the king grew worse, the alarmed mistress tried to come to a compromise with the royal confessor, the keeper of the king's conscience, saying to him, in substance, "Let me go away without scandal, that is, without being *sent* away, and I will quietly let you into the king's chamber;" how the cautious Jesuit

contrived to get through a long interview without saying either yes or no to this proposal; how, at length, when the king seemed near his end, she was terrified into yielding, and the king, fearing to lose his absolution and join some of the bad kings in the other world, sent her a positive command to depart, as if she had been, what the priest officially styled her, a concubine; how the king, having recovered, humbly courted her return, calling upon her in person at her house; and how, while she affected to hesitate, and dictated terms of direst vengeance, even the exile of every priest, courtier, and minister who had taken the least part in her disgrace, she died of mingled rage, mortification, and triumph, leaving both the king and the First Gentleman perfectly consolable. Upon all that we need not here dilate; it is related with modesty and force by the brothers De Goncourt in their work upon the "Mistresses of Louis XV.," a precious series of illustrations of the system of personal government.

The impressive fact is that none of these things impaired the spell of the king's divinity. During the crisis of his fever all France seemed panic-stricken; and when he recovered, the manifestations of joy were such as to astonish the king himself, inured as he was to every form and degree of adulation from his childhood. "What have I done," cried the poor man, "to be loved so?" It was at this time that he received his name of Louis the Well-Beloved, by which it was presumed that he would go to posterity, along with Louis the Fat and Philip the Long, titles so helpful to childish memory. On his return to Paris in September, 1744, "crowned with victory" and recovered from the borders of the tomb, the *fêtes* were of such magnitude and splendor that Madame du Châtelet came to Paris to witness them, with her poet in her train. He brought his "Princesse de Navarre" with him, however, and was soon in daily consultation with composer, ministers, First Gentleman, and friends as to the resources of an extemporized theatre.

A curious street adventure befell madame and himself on the night of the grand fire-works, which they rode in from a château near the city to witness. They found all the world in the streets. Voltaire gave an account of their night's exploits to the President Hénault, whose visit to Cirey they now

returned in an unusual manner: "There were two thousand backing carriages in three files; there were the outcries of two or three hundred thousand men, scattered among those carriages; there were drunkards, fights with fists, streams of wine and tallow flowing upon the people, a mounted police to augment the embroglio; and, by way of climax to our delights, his Royal Highness [Duke de Chartres] was returning peacefully to the Palais-Royal with his great carriages, his guards, his pages; and all this unable either to go back or advance until three in the morning. I was with Madame du Châtelet. Her coachman, who had never before been in Paris, was about boldly to break her upon the wheel. Covered as she was with diamonds, she alighted, calling upon me to follow, got through the crowd without being either plundered or hustled, entered your house [Rue St. Honoré], sent for some roast chicken at the corner restaurant, and drank your health very pleasantly in that house to which every one wishes to see you return."

It was a busy time with him during the next six months, arranging the details of the *fête*, with Rameau the composer, with scene-painters, with the Duke de Richelieu, and the Marquis d'Argenson. We see him cutting down eight verses to four, and swelling four verses to eight, to meet the exigencies of the music. We see him deep in converse with Richelieu upon the complicated scenes of his play, — suggesting, altering, abandoning, curtailing numberless devices of the stage-manager.

On this occasion, also, as before going to Prussia, he took care to secure some compensation in advance. It was not his intention to play courtier for nothing. He was resolved to improve this opportunity, and to endeavor so to strengthen himself at court that henceforth he could sleep in peace at his abode, in Paris, or in the country, fearless of the Ane of Mirepoix. To get the dull, shy, sensualized king on his side was a material point with him. He wrote a poem on the "Events of the Year" (1744), in which the exploits of the king upon the tented field and his joyful recovery from sickness were celebrated in the true laureate style. He also took measures to have this poem shown to the king by the Cardinal de Tencin, "in a moment of good-humor." He made known to two of his friends in the ministry, M. Orry and the Marquis d'Ar-

genson, precisely what he wanted. He wanted an office which would protect him against confessors, bishops, and Desfontaines, — say, for example, gentleman-in-ordinary of the king's chamber, a charge of trifling emolument, less duty, and great distinction. He would then be a member of the king's household, not to be molested on slight pretext by a Mirepoix, nor to be calumniated with impunity by a journalist. But since such offices were seldom vacant he asked to be appointed at once writer of history (*historiographe*) to the king, at a nominal salary of four hundred francs a year. M. Orry thought this very modest and suitable; the Marquis d'Argenson was of the same opinion; and both engaged to aid in accomplishing his wishes. If he could add to these posts an armchair in the French Academy, which in good time he also meant to try for, he thought he might pursue his natural vocation in his native land without serious and constant apprehension.

But, first, the *fête!* That must succeed as a preliminary. In January, 1745, he took up his abode at Versailles to superintend the rehearsals, conscious of the incongruity of his employment. "I am here," he wrote to Thieriot, "braving Fortune in her own temple; at Versailles I play a part similar to that of an atheist in a church." To Cideville, also: "Do you not pity a poor devil who at fifty is a king's buffoon, and who is more embarrassed with musicians, decorators, actors, singers, and dancers than the eight or nine electors will soon be in making a German Cæsar? I rush from Paris to Versailles; I compose verses in the post-chaise; I have to praise the king highly, Madame the Dauphiness delicately, the royal family sweetly. I must satisfy the court, and not displease the city."

In the very crisis of the long preparation, February 18, 1745, seven days before the festival, Voltaire's Jansenist of a brother, the "Abbé Arouet," Receiver-of-Fees to the Chamber of Accounts, died at Paris, aged two months less than sixty years. The brothers, as we know, had been long ago estranged, and had rarely met of late years. The parish register, still accessible, attests that the funeral was attended, February 19th, by "François-Marie Arouet de Voltaire, *bourgeois* of Paris;" not yet gentleman-in-ordinary. The receiver-of-

fees died, as he had lived, in what was called the odor of sanctity; presenting to the view of young and old that painful caricature of goodness which has for some centuries, in more than one country, made virtue more difficult than it naturally is. From his will, which also exists, we learn that, if he did not disinherit his brother, he came as near it as a French brother could without doing violence to the sentiment and custom of his country. After giving legacies to cousins, friends, and servants, he leaves one half the bulk of his estate to his nephew and nieces, and the other half to his brother; but with a difference. Voltaire was to enjoy his half "in usufruct only," the capital to fall finally "to his nephew and nieces aforesaid." He took care, also, to prevent his brother from gaining anything by the decease of any of the heirs. As the receiver-offices, besides bequeathing his valuable office to a relative, died worth, as French investigators compute, about two hundred thousand francs, Voltaire received an increase to his income of perhaps six thousand francs a year.¹

From his brother's grave, without waiting to learn these particulars, he was obliged to go post-haste to Versailles, towards which all eyes were now directed. The marriage festival, a tumult of all the splendors, began February 23, 1745. The "Princess of Navarre" succeeded to admiration. A vast and beautiful edifice had risen, at the command of Riehelieu, in the horse-training ground near the palace of Versailles, so constructed that it could serve as a theatre on one evening and a ball-room on the next, both equally magnificent and complete. The stage was fifty-six feet in depth; and, as the boxes were so arranged as to exhibit the audience to itself in the most effective and brilliant manner, the words spoken on the stage could not be always perfectly heard. But this was not so important, since the play was chiefly designed as a vehicle for music, dancing, costume, and picture. At six in the evening the king entered and took the seat prepared for him in the middle of the theatre, followed, in due order, by his family and court, arrayed in the gorgeous fashion of the time. These placed themselves around him, a splendid group, in the midst of a great theatre filled with the nobility of the kingdom, all sumptuous and glittering. The author of the play about to

¹ Voltaire à Cirey, page 438. *Ménage et Finances de Voltaire*, page 44.

be performed was himself thrilled by the picturesque magnificence of the spectacle which the audience presented, and he regretted that a greater number of the people of France could not have been present to behold the superb array of princes and princesses, noble lords and ladies, adorned by masterpieces of decorative art, which the beauty of the ladies "effaced." He wished that more people could observe the noble and becoming joy that filled every heart and beamed in all those lovely eyes.

But, since nothing can be perfect, not even in France, this most superb audience was so much elated with itself that it could not stop talking. There was a buzz and hum of conversation, reminding the anxious author of a hive of bees humming and buzzing around the queen. The curtain rose; but still they talked. The play, however, being a *mélange* of poetry, song, music, ballet, and dialogue, everything was enjoyed except the good verses, here and there, which could scarcely be caught by distant ears. Every talent in such a piece meets its due of approval except that of the poet, who imagines the whole before any part of it exists. At half past nine the curtain fell upon the closing scene; when the audience, retiring to the grounds without, found the entire façade of the palace and adjacent structures illuminated. All were enchanted. The king himself, the hardest man in Europe to amuse, was so well pleased that he ordered the play to be repeated on another evening of the festival. "The king is grateful to me," wrote Voltaire to his guardian angel, D'Argental. "The Mirepoix cannot harm me. What more do I need?"

He was exhausted with the long strain upon his nervous system. "So tired am I," he wrote to Thieriot, "that I have neither hands, feet, nor head, and write to you by the hand of another." But he soon had the consolation of receiving the king's promise of the next vacancy among the gentlemen-in-ordinary, and his immediate appointment as writer of history at an annual salary of two thousand francs. Thus the year consumed in these courtly toils, he thought, was not without its compensations. Nor did he relax his vigilance, nor give ministers peace, until these offices were securely his by letters patent and the king's signature. His brevet of *histo-*

riographe was signed by the king April 1st, and the salary began January 1, 1745. The document ran thus: —

“To-day, April 1, 1745. The king being at Versailles, taking into consideration that the recompenses which his majesty accords to those who devote themselves to the study of letters contribute to their progress by the emulation which they excite, no one has appeared to his majesty more worthy to receive marks of his benevolence and to be distinguished by an honorable title than the Sieur Aronet de Voltaire, who, by the superiority of his talents and his steady application, has made the most rapid progress in all the sciences that he has cultivated, and of which his works, received with just applause, are the fruit. To this effect his majesty has retained and retains the said Sieur de Voltaire in quality of historiographer of France, permits him to take the title and quality of the same in all documents and papers whatsoever, desiring him to enjoy all the honors and prerogatives which persons hitherto invested with such titles have enjoyed and had a right to enjoy, together with the sum of two thousand francs of emolument, payable annually during his life, beginning with the 1st of January last, according to the conditions and ordinances which will be drawn up by virtue of the present brevet, as well as to certify its validity.

“Signed,

“LOUIS.”¹

When he accepted this office he was far from anticipating an increase of labor through it. But, in truth, no poet laureate ever won his annual pipe of sack by labors so arduous as those by which Voltaire earned this salary of two thousand francs. Several volumes of history attest his diligence. During the first two or three years of his holding the place, he was historiographer, laureate, writer of royal letters and ministerial dispatches, complimenter of the royal mistress, and occasionally court dramatist and master of the revels.

The marriage festivities at Versailles drew to a close, and all that brilliant crowd dispersed. From the splendors of the court he was suddenly called away to attend the son of Madame du Châtelet through the small-pox. He assisted to save the future Duke du Châtelet for the guillotine, applying to his case his own experience of the two hundred pints of lemonade. That duty done and his forty days of quarantine fulfilled, he returned to court, where the minister for foreign affairs had a piece of work for his pen. Elizabeth, Empress of Russia, had offered her mediation to the King of France,

¹ Voltaire à Cirey, page 445.

and the task of writing the king's reply, accepting the offer, was assigned to Voltaire, who performed it in the loftiest style of sentimental politics. If Louis XV. took the trouble to glance over this composition he must have been pleased to find himself saying that "kings can aspire to no other glory than that of promoting the happiness of their subjects," and swearing that he "had never taken up arms except with a view to promote the interests of peace." It was an amiable, effusive letter, in the taste of the period, being written by the man who made the taste of the period. Later in the summer he drafted a longer dispatch to the government of Holland, remonstrating against its purpose of sending aid to the King of England against the Pretender. It was he also who wrote the manifesto to be published in Great Britain on the landing of the French expedition under the Duke de Richelieu, in aid of the Pretender. Whenever, indeed, during 1745, 1746, and 1747, the ministry had occasion for a skillful pen, Voltaire was employed. We perceive in this part of his correspondence the mingled horror and contempt that war excited in his mind. "Give us peace, Monseigneur," is the burden of his cry to the Marquis d'Argenson in confidential notes; and we see him, with his usual easy assurance, suggesting such marriages for the royal children as would "render France happy by a beautiful peace, and your name immortal despite the fools."

Whatever philosophers may think of war, few citizens can resist the contagious delirium of victory after national defeat and humiliation. The King of France again, in 1745, was posed by his advisers in the part of conqueror. From a hill, he and the Dauphin looked on while Marshal Saxe won the decisive and fruitful victory of Fontenoy over the English Duke of Cumberland and the forces of the allies, with a loss of eight thousand men on each side. Voltaire received the news at Paris, late in the evening, direct from D'Argenson, who was with the king in the field. He dashed upon paper a congratulatory note to the minister: "Ah! the lovely task for your historian! In three hundred years the kings of France have done nothing so glorious. I am mad with joy! Good-night, Monseigneur!"

In a few days came that letter from D'Argenson in reply to "Monsieur the Historian" which has long been justly re-

garded as one of the curiosities of the *régime*. It affords matter both for the laughing and the crying philosopher.

“It was a glorious sight [wrote M. d’Argenson to Voltaire] to see the king and the Dauphin writing upon a drum, surrounded by the conquerors and the conquered, the prisoners, the dying and the dead. I had the honor to meet the king on Sunday near the field of battle. When I arrived at the camp from Paris I was told that the king was gone an airing. I immediately procured a horse, and came up to his majesty near a place which was in view of the enemy’s camp. I then learned, for the first time, what his majesty’s intentions were, and I never saw a man so cheerful as he was upon the occasion. Our conversation turned precisely on a point of history that you have discussed in four lines, — Which of our kings gained the last royal battle? — and I assure you that his majesty’s courage did not wrong his judgment, nor his judgment his memory.

“We then went to lie down upon the straw. Never was there a ball night more gay, or so many *bon-mots*. We reposed between the interruptions of couriers and aids-de-camp. The king sang a very droll song of several verses. As for the Dauphin, he went to the battle as to a hare-hunting, saying, ‘What is all this?’ A cannon-ball struck in the clay, and bespattered a man near the king. Our masters laughed very heartily at the man who was bespattered. One of my brother’s grooms, who was behind, received a wound in the head with a musket ball.

“It is certainly true, and without flattery, that the king gained the battle by his own steadiness and resolution. You will see different accounts and details of this affair. You will be told of a terrible moment, in which we beheld a second edition of Dettingen, where the French were prostrated before the English. Their rolling fire, which resembled the flames of hell, did, I confess, stupefy the most unconcerned spectators, and we began to despair for the state.

“Some of our generals, who have more heart and courage than abilities, gave very prudent advice. They dispatched orders all the way to Lisle; they doubled the king’s guard; they had everything packed up. The king laughed at all this, and, going from the left to the centre, asked for the *corps-de-reserve* and the brave Lowendahl: but there was no occasion. A charge was made by a sham *corps-de-reserve*, consisting of the same cavalry which had already made an unsuccessful attack, the king’s household, the carbineers, those of the French guards who had not advanced, and the Irish brigade, who are excellent troops, especially when they march against the English and Hanoverians.

“Your friend, M. de Richelieu, is another Bayard; it was he who

gave and put into execution the advice to attack the infantry like hunters or foragers, pell-mell, the hand lowered, the arm shortened, masters, servants, officers, cavalry, infantry, all together. Nothing can withstand this French vivacity, which is so much spoken of; and in ten minutes the battle was gained by this unexpected stroke. The heavy English battalions turned their backs upon us; and, in short, there were fourteen thousand of them killed.¹

“The heavy artillery had indisputably the honor of this terrible slaughter; there never were so many or such large cannon fired in one battle as at the battle of Fontenoy; there were no less than a hundred. It would seem, sir, as if the poor enemy had willingly permitted everything to reach the army that could be destructive to them, the cannon from Douay, the *gens d'armes*, and the musketeers.

“There is one anecdote of the last attack I mentioned, which I hope will not be forgotten. The Dauphin, from a natural impulse, drew his sword in the most graceful manner, and insisted upon charging; but he was requested to desist. After all, to mention the bad and the good, I observed a habit, too easily acquired, of looking with tranquillity on the dying and the dead, and on the reeking wounds which were to be seen on every part of the field of battle. I own that my heart failed, and that I stood in need of a cordial. I attentively observed our young heroes, who seemed too indifferent upon this occasion. I am fearful that this inhuman carnage may harden their dispositions through the course of their lives.

“The triumph was the finest thing in the world: God save the king; hats in the air and upon bayonets; the compliments of the sovereign to his troops; visiting the entrenchments, villages, and redoubts; joy, glory, and tenderness! But the ground of the picture was human blood and fragments of human flesh!

“At the end of the triumph the king honored me with a conversation on the subject of peace, and I have dispatched some couriers.

“The king was much entertained yesterday in the trenches; they fired a great deal at him, but he remained there three hours. I was employed in my closet, which is my trench; for I confess to you that I have been much retarded in business by all these dissipations. I trembled at every shot I heard fired. I went the day before yesterday to see the trenches, but I cannot say there is anything curious in them in the day-time. We shall have the *Te Deum* sung to-day under a tent, and there will be a general *feu-de-joie* of the whole army, which the king will go to see from Mont Trinity. It will be very fine.

“Adieu! Present my humble respects to Madame du Châtelet.”

¹ There were indeed fourteen thousand men missing at the muster, but about six thousand returned the same day.

Voltaire read this epistle with the delight becoming a courtier of the period, and set to work instantly to turn it into heroic verse. His poem, "Fontenoy," of three hundred lines or more, was scattered over the delirious city damp from the press, and in a few days was declaimed in every town of the kingdom. Edition after edition was sold. "Five editions in ten days!" The author, as his custom was, added, erased, altered, corrected; offending some by omitting their names, offending others by inserting names odious to them; working all one night to make the poem a less imperfect expression of the national joy; not forgetting to dedicate it to the king, and to get a copy placed in his hands. "The king deigns to be content with it," he wrote. Thousands of copies were sold in the first month, and there were two burlesques of the poem in the second.

In the very ecstasy of the general enthusiasm, he still repeats, in a private note to D'Argenson, "Peace, Monseigneur, peace, and you are a great man, even *among* the fools!"

He was now in high favor, even with the king, who had said to Marshal Saxe that the "Princesse de Navarre" was above criticism. The marshal himself gave Madame du Châtelet this agreeable information. "After that," said the author, "I must regard the king as the greatest connoisseur in his kingdom." He renewed his intimacy with his early patron, the Duchess du Maine, who still held court at the château of Sceaux, near by. By great good luck, too, as doubtless he regarded it at the time, he was acquainted with the new mistress, Pompadour, before she was Pompadour. He knew her when she was only the most bewitching young wife in France, cold to her rich and amorous young husband, and striving by every art that such women know to catch the king's eye as he hunted in the royal forest near her abode. Already, even while the king was sleeping on histrionic straw on the field near Fontenoy, it was settled that the dream of her life was to be realized. She was to be Petticoat III.

This summer, during the king's absence at the seat of war, Voltaire was frequently at her house, and had become established in her favor. She was a gifted, brilliant, ambitious woman, of cold temperament, who courted this infamy as men seek honorable posts which make them conspicuous, powerful,

and envied. In well-ordered nations, accomplished men win such places by thirty years' well-directed toil in the public service. She won her place, and kept it nineteen years, by amusing the least amusable of men, and gratifying a sensuality with which she had no sympathy whatever. She paid a high price. In return, she governed France, enriched her family, promoted her friends, exiled her enemies, owned half a dozen châteaux, and left an estate of thirty-six millions of francs.¹

With such and so many auxiliaries supporting his new position, the historiographer of France, if he had been a younger man, might have felt safe. But he knew his ground. Under personal government nations usually have two masters, the king and the priest, between whom there is an alliance, offensive and defensive. He had gained some favor with the king, the king's ministers, and the king's mistress. But the priest remained hostile. The king being a coward, a fit of the colic might frighten him into turning out the mistress and letting in the confessor; and, suppose the colic successful, instantly a pious and bigoted Dauphin became king, with a Mirepoix as chief priest! Moreover, to depend upon the favor of either king or mistress is worse than basing the prosperity of an industrial community upon a changeable fraction in a tariff bill.

Revolving such thoughts in an anxious mind, Voltaire conceived a notable scheme for going behind the Mirepoix, and silencing him forever by capturing the favor of the Pope. Benedict XIV. was a scholar, a gentleman of excellent temper, and no bigot. He owed his election to his agreeable qualities. When the cardinals were exhausted by days and nights of fruitless balloting, he said, with his usual gayety and good humor, "Why waste so much time in vain debates and researches? Do you want a saint? Elect Gotti. A politician? Aldovrandi. A good fellow? Take me." And they took him.

It was soon after the close of the *fête* at Versailles that Voltaire consulted the Marquis d'Argenson, minister for foreign affairs, upon his project of getting, as he expressed it, "some mark of papal benevolence that could do him honor both in this world and the next." The minister shook his head. He

¹ 2 Les Maitresses de Louis XV., 98.

said it was scarcely possible to mingle in that way things celestial and political. Like a true courtier of the period, the poet betook himself to a lady, Mademoiselle du Thil, a connection of Madame du Châtelet, and extremely well disposed toward himself. She had a friend in the Pope's household, the Abbé de Tolignan, whom she easily engaged in the cause. D'Argenson, also, bore the scheme in mind when he wrote to the French envoy at Rome. Voltaire, meanwhile, read the works of his Holiness, of which there are still accessible fifteen volumes, and in various ways "coquetted" with him, causing him to know that the celebrated Voltaire was one of his readers. The good-natured Pope was prompt to respond. The Abbé de Tolignan having asked for some mark of papal favor for Voltaire, the Pope gave two of his large medals to be forwarded to the French poet, the medals bearing the Pope's own portrait. His Holiness also caused a polite letter to be written to him by his secretary, asking his acceptance of the medals. Then the French envoy, ignorant of these proceedings, also applied to the Pope on behalf of Voltaire, requesting for him one of his *large* medals. The Pope, ignorant of the envoy's ignorance, replied, "To St. Peter's itself I should not give any larger ones!" The envoy was mystified, and Voltaire, on receiving a report of the affair, begged the minister for foreign affairs to write to the envoy in explanation.

The two large medals reached the poet in due time. He thought Benedict XIV. the most plump-checked holy father the church had enjoyed for a long time, and one who "had the air of knowing very well *what all that was worth*." He wrote two Latin verses as a legend for the Pope's portrait, to the effect that Lambertinus, officially styled Benedict XIV., was the ornament of Rome and the father of the world, who by his works instructed the earth, and adorned it by his virtues. Emboldened by success, he ventured upon an audacity still more exquisite, and one which would not be concealed in the archives of the foreign office. All Europe should know the favor in which this son of the church was held at the papal court. He resolved to dedicate to the Pope that tragedy of "Mahomet," which the late Cardinal de Fleury had admired and suppressed. He sent a copy of the drama to the Pope, with the following letter:—

[Paris, August 17, 1745.] "VERY HOLY FATHER, — Your Holiness will be pleased to pardon the liberty which one of the humblest, but one of the warmest, admirers of virtue takes in consecrating to the chief of the true religion a production against the founder of a religion false and barbarous. To whom could I more properly address a satire upon the cruelty and the errors of a false prophet than to the vicar and imitator of a God of peace and truth? Will your Holiness deign to permit that I place at your feet both the book and its author? I dare ask your protection for the one, and your benediction for the other. It is with these sentiments of profound veneration that I prostrate myself and kiss your sacred feet."

The Pope delayed not to accept the homage. He answered the letter in the tone of a scholar and man of the world: —

"Benedict XIV., Pope, to his dear son, salutation and Apostolic Benediction. Some weeks ago there was presented to me on your behalf your admirable tragedy of 'Mahomet,' which I have read with very great pleasure. Cardinal Passionei gave me afterwards, in your name, the beautiful poem of 'Fontenoy.' M. Leprotti has communicated to me your distich for my portrait;¹ and Cardinal Valenti yesterday sent me your letter of August 17th. Each of these marks of your goodness merited a particular expression of my gratitude; but permit me to unite these different attentions in order to render you my thanks for all of them at once. You ought not to doubt the singular esteem with which merit so acknowledged as yours inspires me. When your distich was published in Rome, we were told that a man of letters, a Frenchman, being in a company when it was spoken of, discovered in the first verse a false quantity. He pretended that the word *hic*, which you employ as short, ought always to be long. We replied that he was in error; that that syllable was short or long in the poets indifferently, Virgil having made the word short in this verse, —

'Solus hic inflexit sensus, animumque labantem,'

and long in this, —

'Hic finis Priami fatorum, hic exitus illum.'

"This answer was, perhaps, pretty well for a man who has not read Virgil in fifty years. Although you are the interested party in this difference, we have so high an idea of your candor and integrity, that we do not hesitate to make you the judge between your critic and ourselves. Nothing remains but for us to grant you our Apostolic Benediction.

¹ The distich was as follows: —

"Lambertinus hic est, Romæ decus, et pater orbis,
Qui mundum scriptis docuit, virtutibus ornat."

“Given at Rome, on the day of Holy Mary the greater, September 19, 1745, the sixth year of our pontificate.”

To this letter Voltaire replied with curious happiness. He contrived to flatter the Pope very agreeably, while surpassing him on his own ground:—

[Voltaire to Pope Benedict XIV.] “The lineaments of your Holiness are not better expressed in the medals with which you have had the particular goodness to gratify me, than are those of your mind and character in the letter with which you have deigned to honor me. I place at your feet my very humble and heart-felt thanks. I am obliged to recognize the infallibility of your Holiness in your literary decisions, as in other things more important. Your Holiness has a better acquaintance with the Latin tongue than the French fault-finder whose mistake you deigned to correct. I admire the aptness of your citation from Virgil. Among the monarchs who have been amateurs in literature, the sovereign pontiffs have always distinguished themselves; but none have adorned like your Holiness the most profound erudition with the richest ornaments of polite literature.

‘Agnosco¹ rerum dominos, gentemque togatam.’

“If the Frenchman who censured with so little justice the syllable *hic* had had his Virgil as present to his memory as your Holiness, he would have been able to cite, very apropos, a verse in which this word is both short and long. That beautiful verse seemed to me to contain the presage of the favors with which your generous goodness has overwhelmed me. It is this:—

‘Hic vir, hic est, tibi quem promitti sæpius audis.’²

“Rome ought to resound with this verse, to the exaltation of Benedict XIV. It is with sentiments of the most profound veneration and of the most lively gratitude that I kiss your sacred feet.”³

Soon an edition of the tragedy of “Mahomet” appeared, preceded by this correspondence, in Italian and in French, and thus the world was informed, in the most interesting manner, that the author stood well with the head of the church.

He continued to labor for the amusement of the court. He wrote his opera of the “Temple of Glory,” set to music by Rameau, for the grand *fête* to be given at Fontainebleau

¹ For Romanos. 1 Æneid, 281.

² This is the man, this is he [Augustus Cæsar] whom thou hast often heard promised to thee. 6 Æneid, 791.

³ 5 Œuvres de Voltaire, 352.

in honor of the late successes of the French in the field. He also set about preparing a more durable memorial of the two campaigns in which the king had figured, — a history of the same, compiled from the lips of eye-witnesses. He flew at this patriotic task, as he says, “with passion,” and continued it until his work became a considerable history of the reign of Louis XV.

An incident which occurred at the beginning of this task amused him very much, and added one more supper story to his ample stock. Having heard that the secretary of the Duke of Cumberland, during the recent operations, bore the name of his old English friend Falkener, ambassador at Constantinople, he wrote to the secretary, asking for information relating to those operations. He wrote in English: —

“You bear a name that I love and respect. I have, these twenty years since, the honor to be friend to Sir Everard Falkener. I hope it is a recommendation towards you. A better one is my love for truth. I am bound to speak it. My duty is to write the history of the late campaigns, and my king and my country will approve me the more, the greater justice I’ll render to the english nation. Though our nations are enemies at present, yet they ought for ever to entertain a mutual esteem for one another: my intention is to relate what the duke of Cumberland has done worthy of himself and his name, and to enregister the most particular and noble actions of your chiefs and officers, which deserve to be recorded, and what passed most worthy of praise at Dettingen and Fontenoy, particularities, if there is any, about general sir James Campbel’s death, in short, all that deserves to be transmitted to posterity. I dare or presume to apply to you, sir, on that purpose; if you are so kind as to send me some memoirs, I’ll make use of them. If not, I’ll content myself with relating what has been acted noble and glorious on our side; and I will mourn to leave in silence many great actions done by your nation, which it would have been glorious to relate.”

We can imagine his delight on receiving in reply a cordial letter from Sir Everard himself. It was Sir Everard Falkener who was serving under the Duke of Cumberland.

“How could I guess, my dear and honorable friend [wrote Voltaire] that your Mussulman person had shifted Galata for Flanders? and had passed from the seraglio to the closet of the duke of Cumberland? But now I conceive it is more pleasant to live with such a prince, than to speak in state to a grand-visir by the help of an

interpreter. Had I thought it was my dear sir Everard who was secretary to the great prince, I had certainly taken a journey to Flanders. My duty is to visit the place where your nation gave such noble proofs of her steady courage. An historian ought to look on and view the theatre in order to dispose the scenery of his work."

Sir Everard supplied him with abundant documents, and continued to serve him in various ways, as well in the field as at home. One short English letter of the next campaign from Voltaire to Falkener may find place here:—

[Paris, June 13, 1746.] "MY DEAREST AND MOST RESPECTED FRIEND, — Although I am a popish dog, much addicted to his Holiness, and like to be saved by his power, yet I retain for my life something of the english in me; and I cannot but pay you my compliment upon the brave conduct of your illustrious duke. You have made a rude, rough campaign in a climate pretty different from that of Turkey. You have got amongst your prisoners of war a French nobleman called the marquis d'Eguilles, brother to that noble and ingenious madman who has wrote the *Lettres juives*. The marquis is possessed of as much wit as his brother, but is a little wiser. I think nobody deserves more your obliging attention, I dare say kindness. I recommend him to you from my heart. My dear Falkener is renowned in France for many virtues and dear to me for many benefits; let him do me this new favour, I will be attached to him for all my life. Farewell, my dear friend; let all men be friends, let peace reign over all Europe!"

Voltaire suggested to the minister for foreign affairs that he be sent on a secret mission to the quarters of the Duke of Cumberland, in the interest of peace, concealing his object under a pretext of visiting his old friend, the duke's secretary. The scheme, however, was not carried out.

Early in December, 1745, the victories of the French army were duly celebrated at Fontainebleau, when the Duke de Richelieu again called into being a hall like that which had served for the marriage festival, and again Voltaire shone as author of the divertisement performed in it. He presented to the splendid auditory gathered on the occasion three kinds of royal glory. In the first act, Belus figures, a conqueror pure and simple, barbarous and bloody, — a mere despoiler and desolater. Him the Muses disdain and the gods drive from the Temple of Glory. Next appears Bacchus-Alexander, conqueror of India, himself conquered by his appetites, roaming the earth with his bacchanalian crew. To him also a place is

denied in the Temple of Glory. Last comes benign, majestic Trajan, aiming only at the glory of Rome and the welfare of the world; valiant in war, but loving peace; deaf to calumny, but ever solicitous to seek out and reward modest worth, — such a king, in short, as intoxicated France longed to be able to think that Louis XV. was. To him, of course, the Temple of Glory flung open wide its gates, and Louis-Trajan entered, amid the rapturous effusion of the spectators. But he entered not alone. Plotine, a new and tender conquest, appears at his side, and goes with him into the Temple, while the chorus sings, —

“Toi que la Victoire
Couronne en ce jour,
Ta plus belle gloire
Vient du tendre amour.”¹

Who could fail to recognize Louis and Pompadour in Trajan and Plotine? No true courtier. This opera, aided by music, dance, song, and spectacle, all in great perfection, was highly successful. At the close of the performance, the author, much elated, went to the door of the royal box, and said to the Duke de Richelieu, who was near the king, and said it loud enough for the king to hear, “Is Trajan content?” The king had the grace to be disconcerted by this enormous compliment, and made no remark upon it. He ordered the divertisement to be repeated on a subsequent evening; and it served on similar occasions during the long favor of Richelieu.²

During this *fête*, Madame du Châtelet was conspicuous among the grand ladies of the court, and enjoyed once more her hereditary right of sitting in the queen’s presence on a stool without a back, and of losing her money at the queen’s play.

It is more agreeable to observe that Voltaire used this gleam of court favor for the benefit of others, as well as himself. To this period belongs the pleasing story of his inviting Marmon- tel to Paris, and starting him upon the perilous career of liter- ature. With us a poor and ambitious student works his way through college by teaching, by mechanical labor, by harvest- ing, by serving as waiter at summer hotels; in France, he

¹ Thon whom Victory crowns to-day, thy most beautiful glory comes of tender love.

² Voltaire à la Cour, par Desnoiresterres, page 32.

often competes for the liberal prizes offered every year by the "Academies" of the larger towns for the best poems and essays. Marmontel, destined to a long and illustrious literary life, was at twenty an extremely poor student at a college of Toulouse. For the prize of poetry, while as yet he knew not one rule or usage of prosody, he selected as his subject the Invention of Gunpowder, and launched boldly into the sublime,

"Kneaded by some infernal Fury's bloody hands."

The ambitious competitor has related, in his own interesting manner, the results of this venture, —

"I could not [he says in his Memoirs] recover from my astonishment at having written so fine an ode. I recited it with all the intoxication of enthusiasm and self-love; and when I sent it to the Academy I had no doubt of its bearing away the prize. It did not succeed; it did not even obtain for me the consolation of honorable mention. I was enraged, and, in my indignation, I wrote to Voltaire, sent him my poem, and cried to him for vengeance. Every one knows with what kindness he received all young men who announced any talent for poetry; the French Parnassus was an empire whose sceptre he would have yielded to no one on earth, but whose subjects he delighted to see multiply. He sent me one of those answers that he could turn with so much grace, and of which he was so liberal. The praises he bestowed on my poem amply consoled me for what I called the injustice of the Academy, whose judgment, as I said, did not weigh one single grain in the balance against such a suffrage as his. But what flattered me still more than his letter was the present he sent me of a copy of his works, corrected by his own hand. I was mad with pride and joy, and ran about the town and the colleges with his present in my hands. Thus began my correspondence with that illustrious man, and that intimate friendship which lasted, without any change, for five and thirty years, dissolved only by his death.

"I sent my mother the handsome present he made me of his works. She read them, and (on her death-bed) was reading them again. 'If you see him,' said she, 'thank him for the sweet moments he has made your mother pass; tell him that she knew by heart the second act of "Zaïre," that she wept over "Mérope," and that the verses in the "Henriade" upon Hope have never left her memory or her heart.'"

The young man, compelled at length to decide between the church, the law, and literature, consulted the chief of litera-

ture, who advised him to remove at once to Paris and try the career of letters. Marmontel replied that his poverty forbade so doubtful and costly an experiment. During the December *fête* at Fontainebleau, Voltaire was so happy as to get from the Count d'Orry, comptroller-general of the finances, the promise of a place in the public service for the young poet. Let Marmontel relate what followed : —

“Toward the end of this year [1745], a little note from Voltaire came, and determined me to set off for Paris. ‘Come,’ said he, ‘and come without inquietude. M. Orry, whom I have spoken to, undertakes to provide for you.’ Who was M. Orry? I knew not. I went to ask my good friends at Toulouse, and showed them my note. ‘M. Orry!’ exclaimed they. ‘Why, it is the comptroller-general of finance! My dear friend, your fortune is made: you will be a farmer-general. Remember us in your glory. Protected by the minister, it will be easy for you to gain his esteem and confidence. You will be at the source of favor. Dear Marmontel, make some of its rivulets flow down to us. A little streamlet of Pactolus will content our ambition.’ One would be receiver-general; another would be satisfied with an humbler place in the finances, or with some other employment of two or three hundred a year; and this depended on me!”

With six louis d'or in his pocket, and a translation into French of Pope's “Rape of the Lock,” he set out for Paris, a journey of three hundred miles, and reached at length, with palpitating heart and “a kind of religious fear,” the abode of Voltaire.

“Persuaded [he continues] that I should have to speak first, I had turned in twenty ways the phrase with which I should address him, and was satisfied with none. He relieved me from this difficulty. On hearing my name, he came to me, and extending his arms, ‘My good friend,’ said he, ‘I am very glad to see you. Yet I have bad news to tell you. M. Orry had undertaken to provide for you; M. Orry is no longer in favor.’

“I could scarcely have received a more severe, more sudden, or more unexpected blow; but I was not stunned by it. I have always been astonished at the courage I have felt on great occasions, for my heart is naturally feeble. ‘Well, sir,’ said I, ‘then I must contend with adversity; I have long known and long struggled with it.’ ‘I am glad,’ said he, ‘to find you have confidence in your own powers. Yes, my good friend, the true and most worthy resource of a man of letters is in himself and in his genius. But, till yours shall have pro-

cured you something upon which to subsist, — I speak to you candidly, as a friend, — I must provide for you. I have not invited you hither to abandon you. If, even at this moment, you are in want of money, tell me so : I will not suffer you to have any other creditor than Voltaire.’ I returned him thanks for his kindness, assuring him that, for some time at least, I should not need to profit by it, and that, when I should, I would confidently have recourse to him. ‘You promise me,’ said he, ‘and I depend on you. In the mean time, let’s hear what you think of applying to.’ ‘I really don’t know ; you must decide for me.’ ‘The stage, my friend, the stage is the most enchanting of all careers ; it is there that in one day you may obtain glory and fortune. One successful piece renders a man at the same time rich and celebrated ; and if you take pains you will succeed.’ ‘I do not want ardor,’ replied I ; ‘but what should I do for the stage?’ ‘Write a good comedy,’ said he, in a firm tone. ‘Alas, sir, how should I draw portraits ? I do not know faces.’ He smiled at this answer. ‘Well, then, write a tragedy.’ I answered that I was not quite so ignorant of the passions and the heart, and that I would willingly make the attempt. Thus passed my first interview with this illustrious man.”

Marmontel began at once to study the art of play-writing, and an old actor soon set him upon the true path by telling him that the art of writing plays that act well can be learned only at the theatre. “He is right,” said Voltaire ; “the theatre is the school for us all. It must be open to you, and I ought to have thought of it sooner.” He procured free admission for the young poet, and, ere long, Marmontel produced his “Dionysius” with a success that fixed his destiny. Voltaire himself witnessed his second tragedy, “Aristomène.”

“He had expressed [says Marmontel] an inclination to see my piece before it was completed, and I had read to him four acts, with which he was pleased. But the act I had still to write gave him some inquietude, and not without reason. In the four acts that he had heard, the action appeared complete and uninterrupted. ‘What!’ said he, after the reading, ‘do you pretend, in your second tragedy, to supersede a general rule ? When I wrote “The Death of Cæsar,” in three acts, it was for a boys’ school, and my excuse was the constraint I was under to introduce only men. But you, on the great theatre, and on a subject where nothing could confine you, give a mutilated piece in four acts ; for which unsightly form you have no example ! This, at your age, is an unfortunate license that I cannot excuse.’ ‘And, indeed,’ said I, ‘this is a license I have no intention of taking. In my own imagination, my tragedy is in five acts, which I hope to complete.’

‘And how?’ inquired he. ‘I have just heard the last act; all is perfectly coherent; and you surely do not think of beginning the action earlier?’ ‘No,’ answered I, ‘the action will begin and finish as you have seen; the rest is my secret. What I meditate is, perhaps, folly. But, however perilous the step may be, I must take it; and if you damp my courage all my labor will be lost.’ ‘Cheerily, then, my good friend, go on; risk, venture; it is always a good sign. In our profession, as in war, there are fortunate temerities; and the greatest beauties frequently burst forth under the most desperate difficulties.’

“At the first representation he insisted on placing himself behind me in my box; and I owe him this testimony, that he was almost as agitated and tremulous as myself. ‘Now,’ said he, ‘before the curtain is drawn up, tell me from what incident you have drawn the act that was wanting.’ I made him recollect that at the end of the second act it was said that the wife and son of Aristomène were going to be tried, and that at the commencement of the third it appeared that they had been condemned. ‘Well,’ said I, ‘this trial that was then supposed to take place between the acts I have introduced on the stage.’ ‘What! a criminal court on the stage?’ exclaimed he. ‘You make me tremble.’ ‘Yes,’ said I, ‘it is a dangerous sand, but it was inevitable; it is Clairon that must save me.’

“‘Aristomène,’ had no less success than ‘Dionysius.’ Voltaire at every burst of applause pressed me in his arms. But what astonished him, and made him leap for joy, was the effect of the third act. When he beheld Léonide, loaded with irons, like a criminal, appear before her judges, command them by her dignity and magnanimity, get full possession of the stage and of the souls of the spectators, turn her defense into accusation, and, distinguishing among the senators the virtuous friends of Aristomène from his faithless enemies, attack, overwhelm, and convict them of perfidy, amid the applauses she received, ‘Brava, Clairon!’ cried Voltaire, ‘*Macte animo, generose puer!*’”

The coming of Marmontel to Paris added one more to the ever-increasing number of young writers whom Voltaire had assisted to form. The new men of talent were his own, and they were preparing to aid him in future contests with hostile powers. The Marquis de Vauvenargues, the young soldier who was compelled by ill health to abandon the career of arms, in which he was already distinguished, and now aspired to serve his country in the intellectual life, had been for some time one of Voltaire’s most beloved friends. His first, his only work, “Introduction to the Knowledge of the Human Mind,” was just appearing from the press, heralded by Voltaire’s zeal.

ous commendation. "My dear Master," the young disciple loved to begin his letters; and Voltaire, in writing to him, used all those endearing expressions which often make a French letter one long and fond caress. He sank into the grave in 1747, but his name and his work survive. It is evident from his correspondence that he was of a lofty and generous nature, capable of the true public spirit, — the religion of the new period.

Marmontel reached Paris in time to witness a day of triumph for Voltaire, which had been long deferred. There was a vacancy at the French Academy early in 1746. Mirepoix's voice was not heard on this occasion, and Voltaire, without serious trouble, succeeded in obtaining a unanimous election to the chair. This event could not have been at that time any increase of honor to an author of his rank. He valued an academic chair for himself and for his colleagues, such as Marmontel, D'Alembert, and others, as an additional protection against the Mirepoix. Members of the Academy had certain privileges in common with the officers of the king's household. They could not be compelled to defend a suit out of Paris; they were accountable to the king directly, and could not be molested except by the king's command. Above all, they stood in the sunshine of the king's effulgent majesty; they shared in the mystic spell of *rank*, which no American citizen can ever quite understand, and of which even Europeans of to-day begin to lose the sense. He was a little safer now against all the abuses of the royal power, usually covered by *lettres de cachet*.

May 9, 1746, was the day of his public reception at the Academy, when, according to usage, it devolved upon him to deliver a set eulogium upon his departed predecessor. The new member signalized the occasion by making his address much more than that. His eulogy was brief, but sufficient, and, when he had performed that pious duty, he struck into an agreeable and very ingenious discourse upon the charms, the limits, the defects, and the wide-spread triumphs of the French language. With that matchless art of his, he contrived in kingly style to compliment all his "great friends and allies," while adhering to his subject with perfect fidelity. Was it not one of the glories of the French language that a Frederic should adopt it as the language of his court and of his friendships, and

that Italian cardinals and pontiffs should speak it like natives? His dear Princess Ulrique, too, — then Queen of Sweden, — was not French her *native* tongue? There were some wise remarks in this address; as, for example, where he says that eminent talents become of necessity rarer as the whole nation advances: “In a well-grown forest, no single tree lifts its head very high above the rest.” He concluded with the “necessary burst of eloquence” respecting the late warlike exploits of the king; in which, however, he gave such prominence to the services in the field of the Duke de Richelieu, a member of the Academy, that the First Gentleman almost eclipsed the monarch.

He was now at the highest point of his court favor. An epigram of his, written at this period, conveys to us his sense of the situation, and renders other comment superfluous: —

“Mon ‘Henri Quatre’ et ma ‘Zaïre’
 Et mon Américaine ‘Alzire’
 Ne m’ont valu jamais un seul regard du roi;
 J’eus beaucoup d’ennemis avec très-peu de gloire;
 Les honneurs et les biens pleuvent enfin sur moi
 Pour une farce de la foire.”¹

¹ My “Henry IV.” and my “Zaïre” and my American “Alzire” were never worth to me one look of the king. I had many enemies and very little glory. At length honors and benefits rain upon me for a farce of the fair.

CHAPTER XLIII.

OUT OF FAVOR AT COURT.

HIS court favor was no protection to him against his ill-wishers, either within or without the palace. Least of all could it protect him against himself.

His young friend, Vauvenargues, told him truly, just after his election to the French Academy, that his enemies had never been "so unchained against him" as then, and notified him that no effort would be spared to damn his new tragedy, "Semiramis," which he had written for the approaching *fête* of the Dauphiness, and at her request. The generous Vauvenargues was so shocked at the mania that seemed to prevail among some men of letters to degrade their chief that he said he was disgusted, not only with them, but with literature itself. "I conjure you, my dear master," he wrote, "to finish your tragedy so thoroughly that there will remain no pretext for an attack upon it, even to envy's self." The lamentable death of the princess in the second year of her married life delayed the production of "Semiramis," but did not stay the torrent of abuse that assailed the author.

Everything he did was burlesqued or lampooned,—his "Princesse de Navarre," his "Temple de Gloire," his speech at the Academy. The poet Roy, an old man now, and sharper tempered than ever, had been doubly disappointed by Voltaire's success at court. He had composed a divertisement for the wedding *fête*, which had been rejected; and he had been for many years a candidate for an academic chair, with no chance of success. One member, perhaps, remembered his ancient epigram upon the election of the Duke de Clermont, to the effect that $39+0$ does not equal 40. The acidulated poet revived this year a scurrilous poem of his, written in 1736, entitled "The Poetic Triumph," in which the various mishaps of Voltaire's life, real and imaginary, were

related in the manner of a burlesque Odyssey. Of course the "bastonades" figured conspicuously in this work, as well as the controversy with Desfontaines; and, in the new edition of 1746, all the recent adventures and misfortunes of Voltaire which admitted of burlesque treatment were introduced. Roy had a particular skill in defamation, as men of small talent are apt to have, and he produced on this occasion some effective couplets. Besides this burlesque, he composed a parody of Voltaire's "Fontenoy," and a burlesque of his academic discourse, and, in general, "unchained himself" against the historiographer of France.

It is a pity Voltaire could not have been philosopher enough to laugh at all this, and straightway forget it, and so say we all, until some small, malign Roy selects *us* for a target. Then we feel as Voltaire felt, and many of us would do as he did, if we could. Among other things, he casually let loose in Paris drawing-rooms an epigram of the following purport:—

"Know you a certain rhymer, obscure, dry and pompous, often cold, always hard, having the rage and not the art to slander, who cannot please, still less can injure; for his misdeeds in a jail once caged, and after at St. Lazarus confined; banished, beaten, detested for his crimes, disgraced, laughed at, spit upon for his rhymes, — contented cuckold, speaking always of himself? Every one cries, *Ah! it is the poet Roy!*"

Such verses do not appease anger. The booksellers' shops of Paris were not the less littered with burlesques of the author, in verse and prose, sportive and rancorous. From the catalogue which French compilers give of these, we might conclude that they were the chief literary product of the summer of 1746. Voltaire, enraged, unable to reach the well-known, anonymous authors, rose against the sellers of this defamatory trash. Armed with ministerial authority, and conscious of a king's mistress behind him, he caused the shops to be searched by the police, the offensive publications to be seized, and at least five persons to be arrested. Two incidents of these proceedings were exceedingly unfortunate. In one of the houses searched, an elderly man, a zealous collector of the burlesques, was lying sick of a mortal disease, of

which he died soon after. In another instance the wrong man was accidentally cast into prison. One Travenol, a violinist at the opera, had distinguished himself above all others by his industry in spreading abroad everything he could find adverse to Voltaire; induced thereto by some offense the poet had given his mistress in the distribution of the rôles of the opera of "Samson." Travenol being in the country on leave, the police committed the terrible error of arresting his father, an old dancing-master, aged eighty years, who knew nothing of the matter. On learning the mistake, Voltaire procured from the ministry an order for his release; but, unhappily, the respectable old man had been six days in prison, of which three had been passed in solitary confinement, before he was restored to his home. His aged wife, too, and the wife of his absent son were alarmed and distressed beyond measure.

The true culprit was found at length, and against him the exasperated author brought a suit for damages. For a moment, through the good offices of the Abbé d'Olivet, he was disposed to forgive; but, mistaking some proceeding of Travenol, he conceived the idea that he was played upon, and therefore resumed the prosecution with redoubled zeal. For sixteen months this affair was in the courts; the Travenols bringing a counter suit for false imprisonment. After the usual delays, the cause was first tried in December, 1746, when a decision was pronounced which satisfied no one. For the imprisonment of the elder Travenol, Voltaire was condemned to pay five hundred francs damages, with costs, and ordered, in the manner of the ancient courts, not to do so again. Travenol, the younger, was required to pay three hundred francs, with costs and interest, for having "occasioned and circulated defamatory libels" against Voltaire, and he was expressly forbidden to repeat those offenses. Two of the pieces circulated by Travenol, namely, Roy's "Poetic Triumph" and a burlesque by the same author of Voltaire's speech at the Academy, were ordered to be brought to the bar of the court, and there publicly "suppressed and lacerated" by the clerk of the court.

Voltaire appealed to a higher tribunal. Another year passed. After a new trial, which occupied five sessions, the decree of the lower court was confirmed. Again all parties issued from

the contest disappointed. The plaintiff had demanded a particular retraction, and the infliction of a penalty which would deter his libelers from repeating their offenses. He deemed the penalty imposed a mere mockery of justice. "Ought not the scoundrels to be hanged," he wrote to Richelieu, "who infect the public with these poisons? But the poet Roy will have some pension, if he does not die of leprosy, by which his soul is more attacked than his body." Both the court and the public, we are assured, disapproved this prosecution, and censured all the parties to it. The collusion between the old satirist and the young violinist, for the purpose of wreaking their spite upon Voltaire, was sufficiently shown in the course of these trials. Nevertheless, the prosecution of a poor musician for selling burlesques, which gave but slight pain to any one but the object of them, did not present the plaintiff to the public in a pleasing light. Then, as now, a rich and powerful man seeking justice, in a court of justice, against a poor and insignificant man, had small chance of success. The sympathies of the court and the public go with the poor man. Ere long, the poet Roy *was* pensioned; Travenol continued to play the violin at the opera; and the libels were not extinguished.

The favor of the reigning mistress could not avail in protecting the historiographer against the consequences of his own imprudence. The rage among ladies of the highest rank in Europe to possess cantos of "La Pucelle" was such that the author of the poem did not always resist their importunities. The Duchess of Wurtemberg had a portion of it. Frederick II. of Prussia had with him two cantos, and Voltaire could not but remember that once the king's campaign carriage had been captured by Austrian hussars, and manuscripts of his own carried off, no one knew where. That monarch had a peculiar fondness for the "Pucelle." He disapproved the poet's new vocation of historiographer to such warriors as Louis XV. and Richelieu, which delayed the completion of that precious work. "Believe me," wrote the king, in December, 1746; "finish 'La Pucelle.' Better worth while is it to smooth the wrinkles from the foreheads of worthy people than to compose gazettes for blackguards [*polissons*]." He reproached the poet for not trusting him with more of a poem which he had confided to a

lady. "You have lent your 'Pucelle' to the Duchess of Wurtemberg. Know that she has had it copied during the night. Such are the people whom you trust; while the only persons who deserve your confidence, or, rather, to whom you ought to abandon yourself entirely, are the only ones whom you distrust." Voltaire swore that the duchess possessed no more of the poem than the king. "She has perhaps copied a page or two of the part which you have; but it is impossible that she has that which you have not." Besides, he might have added, duchesses do not take the field in a traveling carriage full of contraband writings. The king's mistress could not at that day protect the known author of "La Pucelle," even though she might read it nightly to the king in her boudoir.

Meanwhile, he seemed to be drawing nearer to the court. In December, 1746, according to Duvernet, he made his first appearance at the table assigned in all the palaces of the king to the Gentlemen of the Chamber. The tradition is that some of these high-born functionaries eyed the *bourgeois* gentleman askance, until he had uttered one of those pleasantries which no true son of Gaul can resist. They were speaking of the rumored marriage of a young lord with the daughter of a farmer-general, and the question arose as to where the ceremony should be performed. "At the tax-office," suggested one. "There is no chapel there," said others. Voltaire, hitherto silent, joined in the conversation. "Pardon me, gentlemen," said he, "there is the chapel of the Impenitent Thief." Farmer-general, under the old *régime*, was synonymous in the public estimation with plunderer. The company laughed, and relented toward their new associate.¹ It is not improbable that the *bourgeois* gentleman-in-ordinary was an unwelcome addition to a corps that valued itself upon its unquestionable nobility. M. Desnoiresterres publishes a curiously illiterate letter of the time from a young gentleman to his uncle in La Vendée, in which he reflects upon the king for appointing to so exalted a post "a certain Arouet of Saint-Lou, son of one Domar, who has made himself known under the name of Voltaire." The king, he adds, will not put upon the nobility "the affront" of dispensing this person (*ce cuidam*) from his

¹ Duvernet, chapter xii.

proofs (of nobility); but in order to procure those proofs, he will be obliged to seek them among the relations of his mother, which will be "a dishonor to gentlemen of name and arms, noble from time immemorial." Duvernet's anecdote, therefore, may have had a basis of truth; and it may have been for this reason that the king permitted him, soon after, to sell the keenly-coveted post, and retain its title, rights, exemptions, and privileges. He sold it for thirty thousand francs, and never again bestowed his society upon his colleagues.

Other enemies he had at court, more powerful and more respectable than a second-table of court dandies. In the royal palaces of France and of other countries in that century, there were two courts, the dull-virtuous and the brilliant-wicked; one presided over by the neglected queen, the other by the reigning mistress. The Queen of France, with her children and court, all under the influence of the austere and orthodox Mirepoix, could protest against the life led in the other wing of the palace only by the practice of piety carried to a forbidding excess. They sought and found alleviation in strict compliance with the religious routine prescribed by the church. They lived with some frugality and decency. If their conception of duty and self-control was narrow, erroneous, obsolete, they at least kept alive in France the sense that there were such things as duty and self-control. They felt, also, in some degree, that duty and self-control, though binding on all, are *most* binding upon the powerful and conspicuous classes, who may disregard them for a time with apparent impunity. Nor did they neglect the elegant life. The princesses attempted every art and played upon every instrument, even the trombone, and the queen sustained her wearisome part with sufficient dignity. It was necessary, no doubt, that their mode of virtue, so cramping to the intelligence, so debilitating to the conscience, should pass away, and be supplanted by a mode that will at length give the intellect and taste free play. But, take them just as they were, the life led at the queen's end of Versailles was less remote from virtue than that lived in Pompadour's splendid rooms.

The queen's circle was not so destitute of influence as it seemed. The king was not devoid of natural affection, and he was liable to fits of religious fear. His family, it appears,

had influence enough to keep Voltaire from gaining a firm foothold at court.

This was the period when private theatricals were the reigning amusement of the idle classes in Europe. In 1748 there were, as we are told, sixteen noted companies of amateur actors in Paris among the nobility, without reckoning those of the *bourgeois*, one of which was about to give Lekain to the public stage. Madame de Pompadour conceived the project of amusing the king by a company of amateurs composed of the elect courtiers, herself being manager and chief actress. She possessed all the agreeable accomplishments: she could act, sing, play, and dance, to admiration. She could draw and paint pretty well, and even engrave with some skill. Her company, which chiefly consisted of princes, dukes, and duchesses, was capable of giving comedy, opera, and ballet. Admission to its lowest grade, even to the rank of silent supernumeraries, was regarded in the palace as the most exquisite distinction which a mortal could hope to attain in this sublunary scene. Madame de Pompadour's *femme de chambre* obtained a commission in the army for one of her relations by procuring for a duke the illustrious privilege of playing a policeman's part of a few lines in "Tartuffe."

Voltaire had formed madame's literary taste; he had known her from childhood; he was a member of her circle when the king first cast his eyes upon her bewitching beauty; she had made him the confidant of what she called her "love;" she used to give him some of that medicinal Tokay, recommended by the King of Prussia, which he declared was better than that which the king himself had sent to Cirey. Moreover, she was naturally and necessarily on the side of "the philosophers," who alone could imagine a scheme of morals that would not condemn her position in the home of the Queen of France. Cardinals, bishops, and priests courted her, flattered her, cringed to her, during all her long reign of nineteen years, and stood ready to give the king instant absolution, on the easy condition of her brief residence at one of her numerous châteaux. Nevertheless, she knew very well what the language was in which their profession compelled them to describe hers. In a word, she desired to oblige Voltaire, and she selected his comedy of "The Prodigal Son" as the play

to be first performed in the palace before the king. It had a striking success. At this theatre the etiquette was suspended which forbade applause in the king's presence, and the hall resounded with acclamations. The comedy was even played a second time, which gave the author the right to witness the performance, and admission to the royal theatre ever after. Naturally desirous of testifying his gratitude, he circulated a little poem which he had written for Madame de Pompadour while the king was at the seat of war, in 1745:—

“So then you reunite all the arts, all the tastes, all the talents of pleasing. Pompadour, you embellish Court, Parnassus, and Cythera. Charm of all hearts, treasure of a single mortal, may a lot so blest be eternal! May your precious days be marked by *fêtes*; may peace to our land return with Louis! Be both of you without enemies, and *may both of you keep your conquests.*”

In this poem he now made a slight alteration. Instead of wishing peace to return with Louis, he said, “May new successes mark the *fêtes* of Louis,” which gave it the appearance of a more recent composition. There was a swift copying of these verses in the palace; and she was the fortunate lady who could first exhibit the true version. The queen and her daughters soon read them, and read them only to be the more incensed against the author. According to Pierre Laujon, a dramatist who contributed several pieces to Madame de Pompadour's theatre, and knew all the gossip of both ends of the palace, the entire coterie of the queen and Dauphin were boiling with indignation at the last line of this poem: “May both of you keep your conquests!” Those soured, dull, virtuous people thought this pretty jest “the climax of rashness and audacity.” “The very idea,” says Laujon, “of putting upon a level the glorious conquests of the king in Flanders and his conquest of the ‘heart’ of a mistress was an unpardonable crime.” All the enemies of Voltaire were summoned to a conference in the apartment where the queen usually passed the evening, and there this new audacity of his was amply discussed.

The next day, the king's daughters, who always retained some hold upon his affections, visited him at their usual hour, and embraced him with more than their usual tenderness.

They repeated their caresses again and again, and when his heart was softened toward them they introduced the subject of the verses, and dwelt upon the insolence of a poet who could speak in that light tone of the king's immortal exploits. "Before Madame de Pompadour could be informed of it," says Laujon, "the exile of Voltaire was signed;" and the mistress, powerful as she was, dared not risk a struggle to get the decree annulled. She dissembled her mortification and was silent.

Voltaire dined that evening in Paris with a gay company of literary men, one of whom was his brother dramatist, Pierre Laujon, who reports the scene. Voltaire came late to the feast, no one but himself being aware of what had occurred at Versailles. "Quick!" said the host; "bring some dinner for M. de Voltaire." But the new-comer took nothing except seven or eight cups of coffee without milk and two little rolls. That, however, did not prevent him from "paying his score by a number of piquant sallies." "I remember," says the narrator, "that when the guests began to speak of the new tax upon playing cards, he very strongly approved it, and mentioned many other articles of luxury that invited taxation; thus indicating an ardent and fruitful mind, to which no subject of politics or administration was foreign. After leaving the table, he was surrounded by the guests, who plied him well with questions."¹

This exile of which Laujon speaks was probably a momentary concession to the ladies, and did not involve the immediate departure of the poet from Paris. From about this time, however, in 1747, we perceive, from his letters and other indications, that his court favor was of little force; and in the course of that year an event occurred which caused him to leave the royal abode with precipitation. He was out of place at court. No palace is large enough to contain two monarchs. All deference and courtesy as he was to princes and their mistresses, he was not under the illusion which concealed from many eyes the precise stature of those personages. He knew too well, as he remarked of the jovial Pope Benedict, "what all that was worth."

¹ Œuvres Choiesies de P. Laujon, page 90.

CHAPTER XLIV.

PRECIPITATE FLIGHT FROM COURT.

DURING his long life of literary labor, Voltaire usually had an amanuensis or secretary domesticated with him. Three of his secretaries recorded their recollections, from which we get close and interesting views of the man, both in his ordinary routine and at some crises of his existence. One of them, S. G. Longchamp, entered his service during this turbulent period of court and ministerial favor, and remained with him about seven years. Voltaire evidently had much confidence in him; he trusted him to collect, hold, and pay considerable sums of money, and even left him in charge of important affairs during his own absences from Paris. Some doubt has been cast upon the trustworthiness of Longchamp's extraordinary anecdotes from the incorrectness of some statements which he must have derived from others. The Travenol affair, for example, he misunderstood, and blends with it other matters having no connection with it. When he related what he personally saw and heard, he appears to have usually done his best to tell the truth; and, indeed, we may well ask what mortal could have invented those of his tales which task our credulity most. I shall therefore translate a few passages from his narrative, leaving to the reader the much more difficult task of reading them by the light of other days and climes.

I need only add that Longchamp owed his introduction into the house of Madame du Châtelet to the recommendation of his sister, who was madame's *femme de chambre*. He was first engaged as her steward, or *maître d'hôtel*, and took charge of her establishment in Paris.

LONGCHAMP ENTERS THE SERVICE OF VOLTAIRE.

"I remained five or six months sufficiently at my ease in the house of Madame du Châtelet, having scarcely anything to do except attend-

ing to purchases and commissions. She had but a single meal a day, which was supper, and she took that almost always away from home. In the morning her breakfast consisted of a roll and a cup of coffee with cream, so that her steward and cook had very little occupation. During that period I do not believe she gave more than ten or twelve suppers, and when that happened there were but few guests, with few dishes and still less wine. Her cellar was not well furnished; her wine-merchant sent her two dozen bottles at once, half being red, which he called burgundy, but which really was of Paris vintage; and the other half white, called champagne, and no more correctly styled than the other. When that supply was exhausted it was renewed. My principal business was to lay in the other provisions of the house, — wood, candles, food, etc. Madame did not board her servants, but gave them instead a compensation in money. It was I who was charged to pay them every fifteen days: her coachman, her two lackeys, and her female cook at the rate of twenty sous per day; her footman, her *femme de chambre*, and myself at thirty sous per day. I received also the dessert from the table, which I shared with my sister. It was not long before I wearied of the monotonous life which I led at Madame du Châtelet's, where, during a great part of the day, I was without employment. I sought some resource to dissipate my *ennui*, and I found one which suited me very well. M. de Voltaire lodged in the house, as well as his secretary, and with the latter I contracted a firm friendship. When the work of the house was done, and there remained nothing more for me to do, I mounted to this secretary's room. He gave me the works of M. de Voltaire to read, and even, seeing that I wrote pretty well, begged me sometimes to help him copy the manuscripts of that author, who often overcharged him with work. That amused me much, and when madame was from home, which happened often, I passed almost whole days in this occupation. M. de Voltaire found me there one day, and, knowing me to be attached to Madame du Châtelet and an inmate of the house, he made no objections. He examined my writing, and I perceived that he found it to his mind. From that time I did not fail, whenever there was nothing for me to do, to go to his secretary's room, where I was entertained and instructed, and took pains to improve my handwriting.

“Nevertheless, at the end of some months, I had to renounce this occupation, as well as the house of Madame du Châtelet. I left that lady, perhaps too lightly, piqued at an injustice she had done my sister, whom I obliged also to leave. Some weeks after, there was in her house a more considerable defection. It was the season of the royal residence at Fontainebleau, when all the court was there; ma-

dame, also, as usual, having *tabouret* with the queen, and being of her play. At the moment when she was making her preparations to go to Fontainebleau, all her servants left her, under pretext that living was dearer in that city than at Paris; complaining, too, of her economy and the smallness of their wages, and saying that they could easily find better pay elsewhere. There remained to her only a *femme de chambre*, whom she had taken but a few days before. She had had all M. de Voltaire's servants put upon the same footing as her own, because she governed him; and they left, also, according to an understanding among themselves. As a climax of misfortune, his secretary was taken from him by a violent inflammatory disease. This circumstance, doubtless, made him remember me in the midst of the inconvenient desertion, and, having informed himself of my abode, he sent for me to come and speak to him. He asked me if I was willing to go with him to Fontainebleau, and serve him as secretary during the time of his residence there. Being satisfied with the terms he offered, and charmed also to see the court, which I had not seen since my coming to Paris, I acquiesced willingly in his request. Thus it was that I entered the service of M. de Voltaire. I expected to remain in it only during the stay at Fontainebleau; but various circumstances, unforeseen, deranged my projects, and made me take the resolution to stay with him as long as he wished. I did not leave him until long after, during his residence at the court of the King of Prussia, as I shall relate by and by. I can but applaud myself for having entered his service. I was overwhelmed with his bounties and honored with his entire confidence, as I had previously been with that of Madame du Châtelet."

LONGCHAMP'S FIRST DAY'S WORK FOR VOLTAIRE.

"M. de Voltaire and Madame du Châtelet were lodged at Fontainebleau at the house of the Duke de Richelieu. All their servants had left them the evening before their departure, giving as pretext the insufficiency of their wages. Madame, in haste to set out, took at once and without inquiry the first servants who presented themselves. M. de Voltaire had none. I arrived the third day after them at Fontainebleau, at two o'clock in the morning. All was perfectly quiet in the mansion. After sleeping some hours, I went into the chamber of M. de Voltaire, who was just waking. He had been unable to find any servant. Delighted to see me, he begged me to light his fire, the cold being somewhat severe that day. That done, being still in bed, he told me, to bring him a portfolio, which I did not immediately perceive. As I delayed satisfying him, not knowing where he had put that portfolio, he threw off his bed-clothes, got half out of bed,

and, pointing with his finger to a chair in a dark corner of the room, he cried out with force and emphasis, 'There it is! Don't you see it?' A little confused by the tone of his exclamation, I seized the portfolio, and placed it in his hands. He took from it a copy-book which contained the beginning of his 'Essay upon the Manners and Arts of Nations,' and said to me that, after I had looked about for a lackey, I could employ the rest of the day in copying its contents upon some fine Dutch paper which he had brought for the purpose. He then asked me if I knew how to dress his wig. I answered, Yes. Then he got up, put on his shoes and stockings, and shaved. Meanwhile, I took his wig, dressed it as well as I could, and powdered it with white powder. When he came to put it on it was not dressed to his mind; he laughed at his new wig dresser, took the wig, shook out the powder with violence, and told me to give him a comb. Having given him the one I had in my hand, which was small, although it had two blades, he threw it upon the floor, saying it was a large comb that he wanted. Upon my telling him that I had no other for the moment, he told me to pick it up. I did so, and gave it to him again. He passed it several times through his wig, and, after having put it thoroughly out of order, he tossed it upon his head. I helped him on with his coat, and he went to breakfast with Madame du Châtelet.

"This *début* into the service of M. de Voltaire did not appear to me to promise well for the future, and I applauded my good sense in having engaged only for their stay at Fontainebleau. His abruptness displeased me, and I took it at first for brutality; but I soon perceived that it was in him only an extreme vivacity of character, which burst forth upon slight occasion, and was almost instantly calm again. I saw more and more, as time went on, that, while his vivacities were transient and, so to speak, superficial, his indulgence and goodness were qualities solid and durable.

"A moment after, I went out of the house in search of a servant for him. I went all over the city without being able to find one that would suit him. After having dined, I returned, and set myself to copying the manuscript he had left me."

SUDDEN DEPARTURE FROM FONTAINEBLEAU.

"Neither madame nor he came home during the day. I sat up for them until half past one in the morning, not doubting that they were at the queen's play, which was prolonged sometimes far into the night. At that hour I saw them returning together, both looking sad and troubled. On arriving, madame told me to find her servants, and tell her coachman to put the horses at once to the carriage, as she

wished to leave immediately. At that hour, in the middle of the night, it was difficult to get together her people, who were lodged in various parts of the city. There were only in the house her *femme de chambre* and myself. I went at once in search of the servants. The coachman, whom I awoke first, made haste to harness the horses to the carriage. When all was ready, they got into it with the *femme de chambre*, who had only time to pack two or three parcels, which she took with her. They left Fontainebleau before the break of day.

“This order of Madame du Châtelet surprised me much; I could not guess the true cause of so precipitate a departure. I only learned it at Paris, when I had returned to her house there. That night the play at the queen’s table had been very stormy, and Madame du Châtelet had been particularly unfortunate. Before setting out for Fontainebleau, she had got together as much money as she could. The strong-box of her agent was but slenderly furnished, and she had been able to draw from it only four hundred and odd louis. M. de Voltaire, who did not play, had two hundred in his purse. The first day of their arrival, madame lost her four hundred louis. On returning to her lodging, she dispatched a lackey as a courier with letters to her agent and some friends, in order to get a supply. Meauwhile, M. de Voltaire gave the marquise the two hundred louis which he had brought with him. At the second session these took the same road as the others with great velocity, but not without some remonstrances on the part of the lender. The lackey returned the next day, bringing two hundred louis, which her agent, M. de la Croix, had borrowed at high interest, and a hundred and eighty more, which her friend, Mademoiselle du Thil, had joined to them. With this sum madame returned to the queen’s play. Alas! her louis d’or only appeared upon the table to disappear. Piqued by such constant ill luck, and believing it must cease at last, she determined to make good her losses, and continued to play very high, going in debt for the sums lost. She lost eighty-four thousand francs with inconceivable intrepidity. The play over, M. de Voltaire, who was at her side, alarmed at so considerable a loss, said to her in English that her absorption in the game had prevented her from perceiving that she was playing with cheats. These words, though pronounced in a low tone, were overheard by some one, and repeated. Madame remarked it, and told M. de Voltaire, for whom that could have some disagreeable consequences. They withdrew quietly, and, having taken the resolution to return at once to Paris, they set out from Fontainebleau the same night.

“I remained behind alone to gather and pack their effects, and convey them to Valvin, where I was to take the water-coach [*le coche d’eau*] and bring the whole to Paris. Madame’s carriage took the

high-road. On arriving near Essonne, a wheel of the carriage was broken, and luckily it was almost opposite the house of a wheelwright, who repaired the accident by substituting another wheel. The work finished, it was necessary to pay this wheelwright, but it so happened that neither the masters nor their servants had a single sou. The man, not knowing them, refused to let them go before he was paid. At that moment, by another happy accident, an acquaintance passed, coming from Paris in a post-chaise. Madame du Châtelet, having gone up to the chaise, saw in it with great joy an old friend of her house. She informed him of her embarrassment, which he ended at once by handing to madame the wherewithal to pay the debt and the expenses of the journey."

TWO MONTHS IN HIDING AT SCEAUX.

"When they were near Paris, M. de Voltaire alighted, and went to a village a little way from the high-road. There he wrote a letter to the Duchess du Maine, and had it carried by a peasant, who was to wait for an answer. In this letter, M. de Voltaire informed the princess of his adventure, and prayed her to give him at Sceaux, where she then was, an asylum in which he could be concealed from his enemies. Madame du Maine took his request in good part. A messenger was sent him with a note, informing him that, on his arrival, he would find at the gate of the château M. du Plessis, a confidential officer, who would conduct him to private rooms, which would be made ready to receive him in the manner he desired. He waited until after dark before going to Sceaux, and there he found M. du Plessis, who conducted him, by a secret staircase, to a remote suite of rooms, which was precisely what he wanted. It was from the depths of this retreat that he went down every night to the chamber of the Duchess du Maine, after she was in bed and her servants had retired. A single footman, who was in her confidence, then set a little table by her bedside, and brought M. de Voltaire's supper. The princess took great pleasure in seeing him and talking with him. He amused her by the gayety of his conversation, and she instructed him by telling him many old court anecdotes which he did not know. Sometimes, after the repast, he read to her a tale or a little romance which he had written during the day on purpose to divert her. Thus were composed 'Babouc,' 'Memnon,' 'Scarmentado,' 'Micromegas,' 'Zadig,' of which he wrote every day some chapters.

"On her part, Madame du Châtelet was shut up at home for nearly six weeks, occupied in making arrangements for the payment of her gambling debts. . . . Two months passed before M. de Voltaire dared show himself or leave his rooms in the day-time. At last, Ma-

dame du Châtelet succeeded in appeasing the players who had complained of the words of M. de Voltaire. . . . Madame du Châtelet hastened herself to carry this news to Sceaux, where Madame du Maine retained her. M. de Voltaire then went out of his mysterious asylum, and appeared at the court of the princess, where a number of amiable and accomplished persons were always to be found. From that moment the company were occupied in arranging festivals and divertisements of all kinds for Madame la Duchesse in which every one took part."

LONGCHAMP JOINS HIS MASTER AT SCEAUX.

"After the departure, so precipitate, of Madame du Châtelet and M. de Voltaire, I hastened to execute their orders. The packages were immediately made. I hired a wagon to transport them to Valvin, where I had them placed upon the water-coach, which did not arrive at Paris until pretty late in the evening. Upon reaching the mansion, I found Madame du Châtelet, and was surprised not to see M. de Voltaire. Madame told me that he was not in Paris, which redoubled my surprise. She then explained to me the late proceedings, and the resolution which M. de Voltaire had taken not to show himself for some time, and mentioned the retreat which he had chosen. The next day I received a note from him, in which he told me to go to him at Sceaux, and to bring with me in a hackney-coach the little traveling bureau in which he usually kept his unfinished manuscripts, and which was then in his parlor. He warned me not to arrive before eleven o'clock in the evening, because at that hour I should find some one at the gate of the château who would guide me to his apartments, and who would cause to be carried in the little article of furniture of which he was in need. I executed his orders to the letter, and was conducted to a suite in the second story of the château, looking out upon the gardens and a court-yard. In order to conceal who inhabited those rooms, the shutters remained closed even in the day-time.

"Here I passed nearly two months with M. de Voltaire, without seeing the sun, unless by stealth, or when I escaped on the sly to do some errand in the village. During the first days of my confinement in this new kind of prison, where I had scarcely anything to do, I slept a great part of the day; for idleness was to me a punishment. It was necessary that we should not be seen. I kept close all day, and did not go down until eleven in the evening to sup with one of the footmen of the château, to whom I had been recommended. I usually prolonged this repast until one or two o'clock in the morning, as it was the only one I took in the twenty-four hours. M. de Voltaire did not descend to the room of Madame la Duchesse until every one else

had gone to bed, and did not return to his own until a little before daylight.

"This indefatigable man, to whom an idle life was still more insupportable than to me, laid in an ample supply of candles, by the aid of which he wrote all the time when he was not asleep; and he slept not more than five or six hours, at most. He made me copy the tales with which he was to regale Madame du Maine every evening. From time to time he gave me some commissions for Paris. In that case, I both went out and came back by night, and he remained alone during the day. To remedy this inconvenience, he told me one day to bring him from Paris a little Italian boy, whom he would employ to do his errands, so that I could remain always with him, and said that he would give him a place to sleep in a closet next to the room I occupied, where there was a camp-bed. I easily found such a boy as he wanted, a child of ten or eleven years, sufficiently intelligent, full of candor, and M. de Voltaire was well satisfied with him.

"Here is a proof of his ingenuous character. One day I brought some money from Paris for M. de Voltaire, — a purse containing two hundred louis d'or. Upon receiving it he put a part of the gold into a purse which he had in his pocket, closed the other again, and placed it in a little cupboard at the side of his chamber. In the same cupboard was a pair of new shoes, which M. de Voltaire had brought, but not yet worn, because they were too narrow. Some days after, when I was gone out upon an errand, he took a fancy to wear those shoes. He called Antoine, told him to take them from the cupboard and carry them to a shoemaker in the village to be stretched upon a last. The boy took the shoes, put them under his arm, and started. He crossed the park, which was covered with a foot of snow, slipped, plunged in, fell down, putting the pair of shoes now under one arm, now under the other. He reached the village at last, and entered the shop of a shoemaker, who, late as it was, was still at work. The man took his last and tried to get it into one of the shoes, which he thought at first was hobnailed, since it seemed so heavy. Unable to get in the last, he shook the shoe over a table, when there fell from it a purse full of louis d'or. Antoine, no less surprised than himself, had nevertheless the presence of mind to take the purse, and said, crying, that it was all a trick to prove his honesty. The man comforted him as best he could, and, the work being done, the little fellow paid him and returned. On seeing me, Antoine said, with the tears in his eyes, that he was an honest boy, incapable of doing wrong, and that it was unfair to test him in that manner, and a great piece of good luck for him that the money had not fallen out on the way. I consoled him, praised his honesty, and told him that it was only an effect

of the distraction of M. de Voltaire, who had thrown this money into the cupboard without looking, and had not thought of it again.

“ I took the purse to M. de Voltaire, and related Antoine’s adventure, which confirmed the good opinion he had of him. He put the purse upon his table, and told me we could both go to supper. For his part, he seldom went down to Madame du Maine until between one and two in the morning, and sometimes I returned before he did, each of us having a key to the rooms. This time I came back from supper later than usual. While I was at supper, M. de Voltaire, wishing to know if the money was right, spread it out upon that bureau of his which was covered with a green cloth; after which he went away, forgetting to lock it up, and leaving two lighted candles upon the table, two others upon the mantel-piece, and a door open. While going up-stairs I was astonished to see light in the corridor, and still more astonished to find all the doors open, the gold spread out, and M. de Voltaire absent. It frightened me, and a little after the idea occurred to me to count the sum, in order to ascertain if it was all there. Upon his return I remonstrated upon his imprudence, adding that, for my own satisfaction, I had counted the coins upon the table, and there were one hundred and sixty-five louis. ‘That is my count,’ said he. I asked him if he had actual need of the money. He said, ‘No.’ ‘Very well, then,’ said I, ‘permit me to be the guardian of this sum, that at least I may be sure of its not having a third adventure before the day is over.’ He laughed and consented.

“ Meanwhile, we began to be tired of our retreat. M. de Voltaire took no exercise, slept little, employed all his time in writing, not by the feeble light of a lamp, but by that of wax candles, no less heating to the blood. His health was visibly impaired. For nearly two months we led this solitary life at Sceaux, when, one fine day, Madame du Châtelet arrived, and informed Madame du Maine that there was no longer any reason why M. de Voltaire should not show himself in public. Madame du Maine urged them to remain at Sceaux and join the brilliant company already assembled. The diversions were varied every day: comedy, opera, balls, concerts. Among other comedies they played ‘The Prude;’ and before the representation M. de Voltaire came upon the stage and pronounced a new prologue appropriate to the occasion. Madame du Châtelet, who was as good a musician as actress, acquitted herself to perfection in the rôle of Issé. She played still better, if possible, the part of Fanchon, in the ‘Originals,’ — a comedy by M. de Voltaire, written and played previously at Cirey. This character seemed to be made expressly for her; her vivacity, her cheerfulness, her gayety, were displayed after Nature’s own self. Ballets, also, were executed by the first dancers of the opera.

“Among so many varied pleasures must be mentioned the reading of several novelties, in verse and in prose, which were given in the drawing-room when the company assembled before dinner. Madame du Maine had made known to M. de Voltaire her desire that he should communicate to her little court those tales and romances which had so much amused her every evening. M. de Voltaire obeyed her. He knew as well how to read as to compose. Those little works were found delightful, and every one pressed him not to deprive the public of them. He objected that those trifles of society would not bear the light of publicity, and did not deserve to appear in it. He was obliged at length to promise that, on his return to Paris, he would think of having them printed.

“These amusements continued more than three weeks, which seemed to pass as quickly as a fairy dream. Madame du Châtelet then took leave of Madame du Maine, thanked her for all she had done for them, and returned to Paris.”

VOLTAIRE CIRCUMVENTS A PUBLISHER.

“On reaching home, after three months' absence, M. de Voltaire, unwilling to fail in keeping the promise he had given at Sceaux, resolved to publish some of the little works which had been asked for there. He first made choice of the romance of ‘Zadig,’ one of the most striking, and his intention was not to let the public have it before Madame du Maine and her society had enjoyed the first reading, nor before he had sent copies to all his friends,—a thing not devoid of difficulty, even if he had it printed on his own account. His experience instructed him on this point. He wished, on the present occasion, not to be the dupe of publishers, and, to attain that end, this is what he contrived. He sent for M. Prault, who had previously published pretty editions of several of his works. . . . He asked M. Prault how much he would charge for an edition of a thousand copies of the little romance of ‘Zadig.’ The price not suiting M. de Voltaire, he said the printing would be put off to another time. M. Prault, intending to print extra copies for his own advantage, returned the next day, and was not ashamed to reduce his price more than a third, pretending that he could economize a little both in the workmanship and in the paper. M. de Voltaire said that he wished his work printed in the best manner and upon fine paper, a sample of which he showed, at the same time designating the form and type. He said that he would himself revise the last proof, and he requested that the sheets should be sent to him as soon as they came from the press. M. Prault consenting, M. de Voltaire gave him one half of the romance of ‘Zadig,’ and told him that while that part was in the press he would

revise the other half with care, and perhaps add something to it. The bargain was carried out. M. de Voltaire, having received the first printed sheet, easily calculated that the last chapter of the part which M. Prault was printing would end with a certain page.

“The next day he sent for one Machuel, a Rouen printer, whom he knew to be in Paris, and proposed to him also to print the romance on the author’s account. This printer took the job at a lower price than M. Prault. M. de Voltaire, alleging that he wished to make some changes in the first part of the work, gave him the second half, and told him the number of his first printed page. When all was finished, and the sheets of both halves had been brought in, he saw with pleasure that the two parts agreed perfectly in type and paper. The two publishers having no more copy, and calling to get the remainder of the work, he put them off for some days on various pretexts. Meanwhile, he charged me to seek out some women to fold and sew the sheets, and to buy some elegantly colored paper with which to cover the volumes. I at once found in the quarter Saint-Jacques all that he wanted, and brought back with me two women, who in less than three days folded, sewed, and covered all the copies. He ordered me to make forthwith a package of two hundred copies for Madame du Maine, and to put in envelopes an infinite number of others. He dictated to me the addresses, which I wrote upon the envelopes; being those of all his friends and even his acquaintances, as well those living in Paris as in the provinces. That done, all were sent off the same day by express, by mail, and by the coaches. The next day ‘Zadig’ was a subject of conversation in all Paris.

“The two booksellers, astounded, ran to the house of M. de Voltaire, where they poured forth complaints and reproaches, and asked payment of the sum agreed upon. He told them that, having heard a rumor of their printing more than the prescribed number of sheets, and fearing lest copies might be circulated among the public before his friends had seen the work, which would have frustrated his design, he had been able to think of no better means of preventing it than the little stratagem he had employed. He paid them for the work they had done, and even added something as a mark of his satisfaction with the excellent style in which the printing was executed. He added, by way of completing their consolation, that they could increase their profits by each printing his half and exchanging sheets with the other, so as to make complete copies; or, if they preferred it, each might set in type the other half, and publish an edition of his own. They put a good face upon the matter, begged him to continue his favor toward them, and, I believe, acted upon his advice; for new editions of ‘Zadig’ immediately appeared both in France and in foreign countries.”

A WINTER JOURNEY FROM PARIS TO CIREY.

“On her return from Sceaux, Madame du Châtelet, either to forget her losses or merely to economize, took the resolution to go with M. de Voltaire and pass the rest of the winter at her estate of Cirey in Champagne. She preferred to travel by night. It was the month of January; the earth was covered with snow, and it was freezing very hard. Madame had caused to be made ready all the traps which usually accompanied her in her travels. Her old carriage was loaded like a coach, and it was drawn by post-horses. After Madame du Châtelet and M. de Voltaire were well wedged in side by side in the carriage, they placed the *femme de chambre* on the front seat, with the bandboxes and the various effects of her mistress. Two lackeys were posted behind, and we got upon the road towards nine o'clock in the evening.

“I rode on before as postilion, that they might find horses ready for them, and not have to wait for relays. They were to make one stop for rest at La Chapelle, a château three leagues beyond Nangis, belonging to M. de Chauvelin, where I was to arrive before them, to have a supper prepared and to light a fire in their rooms. I did not wait for them at the post-houses, but kept on in advance, according to their orders. It was an hour after midnight when I reached the post-house of Nangis. It was the festival of the place, and the postilions, not expecting any one at that hour and in such weather, had gone to divert themselves at a ball at the other end of the town. It was in vain, therefore, that I cracked my whip and shouted for the door to open. No one responded. I dismounted, and knocked with all my strength with the heel of my boot. At last, roused by this noise, a neighbor, putting his head out of the window, told me that there was no one at home, and that all the postilions were gone to the ball. I asked him if I could not hire some one to run thither and get the postilions at once. He offered to go himself, and in less than a quarter of an hour he returned with two postilions, which was the number required for the carriages. The time thus lost seemed to me sufficient to allow for the arrival of the carriage, and I was a little uneasy at the delay. I hesitated a moment whether to go on or return to find them; but reflecting that our travelers would be very much dissatisfied if, on arriving at La Chapelle, they should not find their orders exactly executed, I determined to continue my journey; and so much the more as there remained three long leagues to go, by a cross-road with which I was not acquainted.

“Unable to procure a guide, I had the road explained to me several times. I was told that, in going out of this town, I had only to follow

the high-road to the first left-hand turning. From that point the white horse they gave me, which knew that road perfectly, would serve me as a guide, and with the bridle upon his neck would take me straight to La Chapelle. I followed these directions, and after an hour and a half found myself opposite to the gate of a château, where the horse stopped of his own accord. The *conciérge*, who expected no one, was gone to bed in the interior of the château, which was separated from the gate-way by a vast court-yard. In vain, therefore, I called and shouted; no one replied. Then, leading my horse by the bridle, I endeavored to go round the château, to see if I could make myself heard better at some other place. I came at last to a little door where there was a bell, which I rang several times. I saw with pleasure that I was heard; a gardener came and asked me who I was and what I wanted. I having answered him, he went to wake the *conciérge*, who soon came and let me in. He immediately roused the servants, lighted a great fire in the kitchen and fires in the chambers. Some pigeons were brought and a chicken, which were immediately prepared and put down to roast. They added everything which they could find suitable to satisfy travelers, whose appetite ought to be well disposed. Nevertheless, despite all the time thus employed, they did not arrive. The day was about to dawn, and, my uneasiness increasing at every moment, I decided to return to Nangis, in order to discover what could have happened to them. I mounted, and set out from the château toward eight o'clock in the morning. I had gone some hundreds of paces when I perceived a carriage coming towards me very slowly, which I soon recognized to be that of Madame du Châtelet. When I had ridden up, they soon told me the cause of their delay; and the story was related afterwards to me in detail by the *femme de chambre*, and confirmed by M. de Voltaire himself.

“About half-way to the village of Nangis, the hinder spring of the carriage broke and let the carriage down upon the road, upon the side where M. Voltaire was seated. Madame and her *femme* fell upon him, with all their bundles and bandboxes, which were loosely piled on the front seat on each side of the woman, and which, following natural laws, were precipitated toward the corner where M. de Voltaire was compressed. Half stifled under such a load, he uttered piercing cries, but it was impossible to change his position. He had to remain as he was until the two lackeys, one of whom was hurt by his tumble, came up with the postilions to unload the carriage. First, they drew out all the bundles, then the women, then M. de Voltaire. They could get them out only by the door of the carriage which was uppermost; and hence, one of the lackeys and a postilion, having climbed upon the body of the carriage, drew them out as from a well, seizing them by

the first members which presented themselves, arms or legs, and passed them into the hands of their comrades below, who put them on the ground ; for there was neither step nor stool by which they could be assisted to descend. It was then the question how to raise the carriage and see what had caused its overturn. These four men were not strong enough to do it, so overloaded was the roof with baggage, and it was necessary to dispatch a postilion on horseback for help in the next village, a mile and a half distant.

“ While he was gone, M. de Voltaire and madame were seated side by side upon the cushions of the carriage, which had been drawn out and placed upon the road, that was covered with snow ; and there, almost benumbed with cold notwithstanding their furs, they admired the beauty of the heavens. It is true, the sky was perfectly clear, the stars shone with the utmost brilliancy, the whole horizon was in view ; no house, no tree, concealing from them the least part of it. It is known that astronomy was always one of the favorite studies of our two philosophers. Ravished by the magnificent spectacle displayed above and around them, they discoursed, shivering, upon the nature and the movements of the stars and upon the destination of so many immense globes scattered in space. They wanted nothing but telescopes to be perfectly happy. Their minds being thus lost in the depths of the skies, they were no longer conscious of their disagreeable position on the earth, or rather upon the snow, and in the midst of fragments of ice.

“ Their learned contemplation and discourse were interrupted only by the return of the postilion, who brought with him four men, furnished with cord, tools, and a false spring. The carriage being set upright, the real cause of the accident was perceived, and they mended it as well as they could with the materials they had brought with them. Twelve francs were given them when their work was done ; and they returned toward their village, little content with this sum, and grumbling at it.

“ The carriage went on again, but had scarcely gone fifty paces when the cords, not being strong enough, became loose and partly broken, and the vehicle came down a second time, but without overturning, which rendered this new break-down much less disagreeable to our travelers.

“ Some one ran quickly after the workmen who had just left. They, however, did not wish to return. They were brought back by force of promises that they should be better paid. With the assistance of the postilions, they raised the body of the coach with levers, and mended it more strongly, without deranging the interior of the vehicle. For greater safety, they proposed to these workmen to go with them as far as Nangis, which they did, and the carriage arrived there without other

accident. This time the men were liberally paid, and they went home well satisfied. The spring was solidly repaired by a blacksmith of that town, but the body of the vehicle was so badly damaged that the blacksmith advised them to go no faster than a walk, if they wished to prevent accidents; and it was so that they went nine miles before arriving at a good harbor.

“Having reached the château, they warmed themselves thoroughly before a large fire, which was not less necessary to them than nourishment. After having supped, or, to speak more correctly, breakfasted, for it was daylight, they withdrew to their rooms, where good beds had been prepared for them, and they slept very well till late in the afternoon. M. de Voltaire, having got up, ordered me to get workmen to repair the body of the carriage, which proved to be in such bad order that it took two whole days to put it in tolerable condition. On the third day we left La Chapelle, and arrived at length, without new delay or accident, at Cirey, the estate of Madame du Châtelet.”

MADAME PROJECTS A PRIVATE EDITION OF “LA PUCELLE.”

“Madame du Châtelet had long had a copy of ‘La Pucelle,’ written with her own hand. Her friends, both men and women, often importuned her to read portions of it to them. This trouble, from which she wished to be freed, suggested to her an odd idea, which was to print the poem secretly at her château of Cirey during her sojourn there in the following year, 1749. Her design was to have but a very small number of copies printed, to be distributed among those of her friends whom she knew to be discreet. Counting in advance upon the acquiescence of M. de Voltaire, she began, even in the winter, to prepare quietly for the execution of her project. In order to confine the secret to fewer persons, she resolved to take part in the work herself, with two faithful workmen, one of whom was to instruct her in making up the pages. This was an adroit and intelligent printer named Lambert, who for a number of years enjoyed the confidence of Madame du Châtelet and of M. de Voltaire. He performed well the commissions which they gave him, and he became their usual purveyor of forbidden books. Madame charged him to select a comrade for the following spring, and the conditions were arranged to their satisfaction.

“Lambert bought two fonts of new type, well assorted, from a type-founder of his acquaintance, who gave him pretty long credit and took notes in payment. He procured also some forms and a press, and the other necessary articles. The whole was packed and deposited with a commissioner of transportation, who, upon the first advice, was to send it to Bar-sur-Aube, whence the servants of Madame

du Châtelet would have conveyed it to Cirey. According to the project, Madame la Marquise was to preside at the case, that is to say, at the type-setting, with the aid of Lambert, who, with the assistance of his companion, was to work the press. They counted upon M. de Voltaire as proof-reader.

“All being thus very well arranged, there remained only one trifling difficulty, which madame flattered herself to be able to overcome easily: it was merely to get the author’s consent. He ought to have been told of it the first, but he was told the last. She ended where she ought to have begun; for madame must have known that the operation could not go on in the chateau without M. de Voltaire’s knowing it. She cherished the idea that to oblige her he would consent to a thing which would remain secret between them and a very small number of sure friends.

“She was deceived. Scarcely had she spoken a word of it, when he rejected the idea. At first he thought it was only a jest, but when he saw that the scheme was serious, and that preparations were already made, he was much excited, and dwelt with energy upon the consequences of such an enterprise; among others, the danger of seeing the book fall into the hands of strangers, whether by indiscretion or by accident, and so reach the public, which would expose both of them to serious inconveniences and bitter regrets. She could not resist the force of those reasons. It was no longer a question of printing ‘*La Pucelle*.’ She explained the matter afterwards to Lambert; the materials, which were still at Paris, were given back to the dealers, who consented to receive them, on being indemnified for their trouble. Lambert was recompensed for his pains, and took upon himself to satisfy the comrade whom he had engaged.”

MADAME LA MARQUISE WILL NOT BE IMPOSED UPON.

“Madame la Marquise du Châtelet, who had much enjoyed her last visit to the court of the King of Poland, and had promised that prince to return the next summer, was well disposed to keep her word, and took, with M. de Voltaire, the resolution to go thither without stopping on the road, and the carriage was therefore furnished with some provisions. But on reaching Châlons-sur-Marne, madame felt herself slightly indisposed, and made the postilion stop opposite the Bell Inn. There, while they changed horses, she had a fancy to take a bowl of broth. The landlady, having ascertained who it was she had the honor to serve, came to the carriage door, having a napkin under her arm, a porcelain plate in her hand upon a silver tray, and a porringer of silver containing the broth. While madame was taking it the horses were already put to, and ready to start. I hastened to carry

back the plate and the other articles to the landlady, and asked her how much we had to pay. 'One louis,' said she. I was almost prostrated at this word; then, recovering from my astonishment, I cried out upon the enormity of the price, and said to her that I would have thought a crown, or even four francs, too much. She declared she could not abate one sou. Upon this I went to explain the matter to madame, who was of my opinion. The landlady, who had followed me, then approached the carriage door, and upon madame representing to her how excessive her demand was she replied that she was not accustomed to have her charges disputed, and that it was her fixed price. I took the liberty to remark that with a crown's worth of meat I could make several bowls of broth, and the meat would still remain over and above. Consequently I believed I should be paying her well in offering her that crown. She persisted, declaring that all the persons who did her the honor to alight at her house, whether they took only a fresh egg, a bowl of broth, or a dinner, invariably paid the same price. 'Very well,' replied I, 'we have not alighted; Madame la Marquise has not left the carriage, and has not set foot upon the threshold of your door.'

"M. de Voltaire, joining in the colloquy, said to the landlady, 'Your method, madame, seems to me as new as it is strange, and I believe it very little advantageous to your house; for, in fact, all travelers are not in a condition to give twenty-four francs for a bowl of broth, and for one or two customers who fall, without knowing it, into your net you are likely to lose a hundred others.'" Thereupon the woman began to be angry and to dispute with a loud voice, and at the noise she made one, two, three, four neighbors and more left their shops and came to hear what was going on. Soon a numerous populace ran from all directions and grouped themselves around the carriage, clamoring and wishing to know what was the matter. All asked and answered at the same time; it seemed as if a sedition was going to burst forth in the town. All that we could discern amid so many squeaking voices was that the landlady was in the right. M. de Voltaire saw plainly that there was no means of gaining the suit against so powerful a party. He was of opinion that it was necessary to give it up, and to get out of the scrape like Harlequin, that is, by paying. This I did, and we set out, not without exciting the laughter of all that crowd. Madame du Châtelet swore well that, no matter how exhausted she might be in traveling from Paris to Lorraine, she would never stop in that cursed town, and the broth of Châlons-sur-Marne was not rubbed out of her tablets."

VOLTAIRE AND LONGCHAMP MAKE A JOURNEY TO PARIS.

“Fifteen days after their arrival at Lunéville they learned by a letter from M. d'Argental that the French actors were preparing to give immediately the first representation of 'Sémiramis.' They would have both liked to be present; but madame, fearing to displease the King of Poland, consented to remain at Lunéville and to let M. de Voltaire set out alone for Paris. He took only me with him, and placed me on the front seat of the post-chaise. As he had time to spare, he resolved to visit on the way some persons of his acquaintance, and particularly to go through Reims, to see M. de Pouilli, his old college friend, who had invited him many a time. We started, and our first bait was at the country-house of the Bishop of Châlons-sur-Marne, a colleague of M. de Voltaire at the French Academy, and his friend. He was very well received, and passed three days there; and even on the fourth that prelate consented to his leaving with reluctance, because the weather was threatening. In fact, at the end of some hours the sky was covered with very black and frightful clouds; whirlwinds of dust almost hid the road from view; we were dazzled and deafened by the lightning and thunder. Half-way between Châlons and Reims this storm ended by a rain so abundant that the foot-path and ditches on each side of the road were both overflowed. M. de Voltaire, fearing to be overturned and drowned, made the chaise stop in the middle of the road, which, with the adjoining fields, was one sheet of water. He attentively considered this spectacle, and suffered much to see the postilion and his horses drenched while we were sheltered. At length, the weather improving and the waters having subsided, we could continue our journey, and at night-fall reached Reims. M. de Voltaire was expected, as he had sent a note from Châlons to M. de Pouilli, asking hospitality.

“A grand repast was prepared, to which had been invited several friends of M. de Voltaire; and they made it a festival to meet that celebrated man. The beginning of the supper was noisy enough, every one talking at once. The guests interrupted one another, and M. de Voltaire kept on eating and said not a word. At last, the desire to hear him speak induced a moment of silence. M. de Pouilli, then alluding to the dangers which M. de Voltaire had run upon the road, asked him some questions on the subject. Replying, he entered into details, and described the storm he had encountered in a manner so pathetic that the whole company listened with the greatest interest, scarcely daring to breathe for fear of interrupting him, or to lose a word of what he was saying. His narrative, however, was quite natural, without emphasis and without gesture. The truth of

the images, the simplicity of his words, their variety and suitableness, sufficed to excite the highest degree of emotion. Even I, who had been witness of the event, and who heard him relate it with the same attention as the guests, believed for the moment that I was again upon the high-road and in the midst of the inundation. After supper, when the company was gone, M. de Voltaire, before going to bed, talked again a quarter of an hour with M. de Pouilli, who felicitated himself upon having spoken of the storm. 'For my part,' he added, 'I was in no degree astonished at the impression which you made upon them; for I assure you that never did the description of a tempest give me more affright and at the same time more pleasure.'

"The next morning we took the road to Paris, where we arrived in the evening."

THE PLOT AGAINST THE NEW TRAGEDY.

"The actors had already had one rehearsal of the tragedy of 'Sémiramis.' They rehearsed it several times in the presence of the author, who gave them some useful hints, from which they profited. Although he was well enough satisfied with their ability, and could count upon their zeal, and had elaborated his tragedy with much care, he was far from daring to depend upon its success. He was not ignorant that Piron, who thought himself much superior to him, and was jealous of his successes, had fomented a powerful cabal against 'Sémiramis,' and that to this band were rallying the soldiers of Corbulon, as he used to call the partisans of Crébillon, in allusion to a passage in one of his pieces. The latter were in truth much less sincere admirers of their hero than jealous enemies of Voltaire; and as M. de Crébillon had also written a 'Sémiramis,' they assumed that no other author should dare to make a better one.

"To counterbalance this league, M. de Voltaire had recourse to a measure little worthy of him, indeed, but which he believed necessary, and which, in fact, was not without effect. He bought a number of pit tickets, which he gave to his friends and acquaintances, who in turn distributed them among their friends. Thieriot, Lambert, the Abbé de La Mare, and others, whose devotion he knew, acquitted themselves very well of this commission. I had also my share of tickets to give away, and I placed them in good hands; by which I mean hands capable of clapping well and at the proper places. The day of the first representation arrived (August 29, 1748). The champions on both sides did not fail to be present on the field of battle, armed *cap-à-pie*, among whom I held firmly my rank of foot-soldier. Each party was confident of victory, and the struggle was therefore hard and painful. Even during the first scene there was excitement in the

pit; some bravos, some murmurs, were heard, and even some faint hisses. But from the start the applause at least balanced the signs of discontent, and finished by stifling them. The piece held its own, ended very well, and its success seemed not equivocal. . . . The antagonists of M. de Voltaire renewed their attempts on the following nights, but they served only the better to assure his triumph. Piron, to console himself for the defeat of his party, employed his usual resource, and assailed 'Sémiramis' with spiteful epigrams which did it harm."

THE AUTHOR OF "SÉMIRAMIS" GOES IN DISGUISE TO HEAR THE
VERDICT OF THE CAFÉ DE PROCOPE.

"M. de Voltaire, who loved always to correct and improve his works, desired to know more particularly and with his own ears what was said for and against his tragedy, and he thought he could do this nowhere better than at the Café de Procope, which was called also the Cave of Procope, because it was very dark, even in broad daylight, and by no means well lighted in the evening, and because poets were often seen there, gaunt and pallid, who looked like ghosts. In this café, which is opposite the theatre, had been held for more than sixty years the tribunal of the self-styled Aristarques, who imagined themselves judges in the last resort of pieces, authors, and actors. M. de Voltaire wished to appear there disguised and entirely *incognito*. It was at the end of the play that the judges used to begin what they called their grand sessions.

"On the day of the second representation of 'Sémiramis,' he borrowed the garb of an ecclesiastic. He put on a cassock, with a long cloak, black stockings, a girdle, bands, and, that nothing might be wanting, a breviary. Upon his head he wore an ample wig without powder, ill dressed, which covered more than half his cheeks, and left visible scarcely anything of his face except the end of a long nose. This was surmounted by a large three-cornered hat, much dilapidated. It was in this costume that the author of 'Sémiramis' went on foot to the Café de Procope, where he established himself in a corner, and, while waiting for the end of the performance, called for a cup of tea, a roll, and a newspaper. He had not long to wait before the frequenters of the parterre and of the café arrived. There were present persons of both the parties, and they entered at once into the discussion of the new tragedy. His partisans and his adversaries pleaded with warmth, and gave reasons for their judgment. Some impartial persons offered their opinion, and repeated beautiful verses of the piece.

"All this time M. de Voltaire, with spectacles upon his nose, his head bent over the newspaper which he pretended to read, listened to

the debates, profited by the reasonable remarks, and suffered much from hearing absurd observations without being able to reply, which put him into bad humor. In this way, during an hour and a half, he had the courage and patience to hear people reason and gossip upon 'Sémiramis' without uttering one word. At length, all these pretended arbiters of the renown of authors having retired without converting one another, M. de Voltaire left also, took a cab in the Rue Mazarine, and reached home at eleven o'clock. Although I knew his disguise, I confess that I was again struck and almost frightened on seeing him accoutred as he was. I took him for a spectre of Ninus who was appearing to me, or, at least, for one of those Hiberian arguers arrived at the end of their career, after having exhausted themselves in syllogisms in the schools. I helped him shed all these traps, which I took back the next day to their true owner. After having made some corrections in several of the parts, and given them to the actors, M. de Voltaire did not wish to remain in Paris, and no longer doubting the success of his piece he set out satisfied, and eager to rejoin Madame du Châtelet at Lunéville."

VOLTAIRE RESCUES HIMSELF FROM DEATH AND A COUNTRY DOCTOR.

"M. de Voltaire, when he arrived at Paris (in August, 1748), did not enjoy very good health. A slow fever wore upon him severely. Rest and his usual regimen could have calmed and even cured him, but it was impossible to think of rest in Paris, where he was always in agitation: by day, visits and continual running about; at night, writing, kept up almost until morning. He scarcely reserved some hours for sleep. His fever increased. Although extremely fatigued and suffering much, he persisted not less in setting out for Lunéville.

"At Châlons, where we stopped at the post-house, it was necessary to rest, for it was impossible for M. de Voltaire to go further. He had no longer the strength to stand or talk, and I was obliged to carry him from his carriage to a bed. Fearing that this was the beginning of a dangerous disease, I thought it my duty to notify the Bishop and the Intendant of Châlons, who had always testified much regard for him. Both came to see him the same day, and pressed him to let himself be carried to one of their houses, that he might be the better cared for. M. de Voltaire excused himself from accepting their offer, assuring them that he already felt himself better since he had taken some repose in bed. The magistrate insisted upon sending him his own doctor, who, in fact, came to see him in the evening, examined him, and prescribed bleeding and various medicaments. M. de Voltaire listened to him with much patience, and replied to his questions as laconically as possible; but when the doctor was gone, he told me

that he should follow none of his directions, for he knew how to manage himself as well in sickness as in health, and he should continue to be his own doctor, as he had always been. The bishop and the magistrate then urged that, at least, some of their servants should come and take care of him. This offer he also declined, saying that a woman was already engaged to watch with him and make his broth, and that I should serve as her assistant and do his errands out-of-doors.

“M. de Voltaire had eaten nothing since we left Paris. As night was coming on, I proposed to him to take some broth, to which he consented; but scarcely had it touched his lips, when he pushed it away and shook his head, intimating that he did not wish any. Then, with a voice scarcely audible, he entreated me *not to abandon him, and to remain near him in order to cast a little earth upon his body when he had breathed his last.* I was surprised and still more alarmed at these words, and indeed not without reason, for that night was one of his worst. He had a burning fever accompanied by delirium, and when the fit was passed there was scarcely any life left in him. Next morning he was again visited by the bishop, the intendant, and the doctor. Those gentlemen could scarcely get a word from him, and they saw him steadily refuse all the drugs the doctor tried to make him swallow. On leaving him they did not conceal their apprehension of seeing him perish, and hasten his end by his obstinacy in refusing to take what they recommended for his relief.

“When they were gone he made me come near his bed, and putting into my hand a purse full of gold, which had been in the drawer of his night-table, he said to me that if he yielded to his malady his intention was that I should keep that sum, which was all the good he could do me at the moment; but if, on the contrary, he escaped the danger which threatened him, I was to give him back the purse, on account of the immediate use he should then have for it, and he would supply its place by a recompense with which I should be better satisfied. He prayed me not to abandon him in his present situation, and to remain with him to the last in order to close his eyes. I replied with tears that I would never leave him, that his orders were sacred to me, that I hoped still to see him restored to health, and that that was all I desired. I assured him he could count upon the sincerity of my words, for I loved him, and was truly attached to him.

“On our arrival at Châlons I had, unknown to him, written a few lines to Madame Denis and to Madame du Châtelet, to inform them of his sickness and of the place where he was. Nevertheless, as soon as he had come to himself, I asked him if he did not think I had better send for madame his niece to come and bear him company. He was then on ill terms with her, and had not seen her for some time.

He absolutely forbade me to write to her. However, I received every day letters from Madame Denis, and I gave her an account of her uncle's health by every courier who left for Paris, as also Madame du Châtelet by the couriers who went to Strasbourg by way of Lunéville.

“As he continued to be unwilling to take any solid food whatever, confining himself to certain drinks, such as weak tea, toast and water, and a very refreshing kind of barley water, slightly aperient, he became so weak that he could scarcely move any of his limbs. At length, in the evening of the sixth day after our arrival at Châlons, he astounded me by telling me to prepare everything for his departure, to pay what he owed, pack his trunk, and make arrangements for leaving Châlons very early in the morning, since he did not wish to die there. He added that if at the break of day he was still alive, whatever his condition might be, I had only to carry him to his post-chaise, and convey him to Lunéville. He dictated to me some lines to inform the bishop and the intendant of his sudden resolution, and to thank them for their attentions. The landlord was charged to forward those notes to them after our departure. Then he rested, and I occupied myself with the execution of his orders.

“The next day, all being ready and the horses harnessed, I carried him out to his post-chaise, wrapped in his dressing-gown, and a counterpane over it. I seated myself in front of him, so as not to lose him from my sight, and to hold him up if he should fall forward; to which precaution I added that of tying together the hand-straps at the sides, which formed a kind of barrier to keep him in place. It was in this way that I brought him from Châlons to Saint-Dizier [about thirty miles], without his uttering a single word. He was so weak, so pale, that I dreaded not to be able to get him to Lunéville alive. While we were changing horses at Saint-Dizier, he seemed as if to wake from a sleep all of a sudden, and asked me where we were and what o'clock it was. Having answered these questions, I asked him some questions in my turn, but he made no answer, and appeared to relapse into unconsciousness. We resumed our journey.

“Between Saint-Dizier and Bar-le-Duc we met a lackey, whom Madame la Marquise du Châtelet had sent on a post-horse to Châlons, to ascertain more particularly the condition of the sick man, and to see if he could bear transportation to Lunéville. I mentioned this to M. de Voltaire. It appeared to give him pleasure and restored him a little. The lackey returned, and served us as a courier to have horses got ready upon the road, so that we arrived at Nancy in the evening before the closing of the gates. We alighted at the post-house, where the lackey of madame waited upon us again, to know if there were

any orders for him. M. de Voltaire charged me to tell him to push on to Lunéville, so that madame should get news of him the sooner. As to himself, he could go no further without much risk. Exhausted with fatigue and inanition, I put him into a good bed on arriving, and had some broth brought to him. He drank the whole of it with relish. Having myself no less need of nourishment, for I had scarcely broken my fast all day, I had my supper brought into his chamber, where also I had a camp-bed put for myself; for I remained with him night and day. Seeing the avidity with which I devoured what they brought me, he said, 'How happy you are to have a stomach and a digestion!' He had seen disappear half a leg of mutton and a side-dish. They brought me, besides, two roast thrushes and a dozen red-throats, which latter are the ortolans of the country, and they were then in season. I asked him if he was not tempted to suck one of those little birds. 'Yes,' said he, 'I would like to try one.' I picked out two of the fattest, and carried them with a morsel of the crumb of bread to his bed, where, half reclining, he ate a good part of them with pleasure. Then he asked for a glass of wine mixed with a third of water, which also he swallowed briskly enough. After that he told me he felt some inclination to sleep, and that after I had finished my supper I had only to go to bed. The next morning, as soon as he awoke, we were to start for Lunéville.

"Then, putting his head upon the pillow, he soon fell asleep. For my part, I slept very well until five in the morning. By six all the arrangements for our departure were made, and I only waited for M. de Voltaire to wake. I saw him in a sleep so profound that nothing could have induced me to interrupt it. I went from time to time to look at him, thoroughly resolved to let him wake of his own accord. I was far from expecting that that moment would not arrive until three o'clock in the afternoon. At that hour he drew aside his curtains, saying that he had slept well. He had slept better and longer than he supposed. I helped him get up and dress. That sleep had refreshed him, and I found him improved. After he had taken some broth with bread in it, we set out at five in the afternoon for Lunéville [ten miles distant], where we arrived easily the same evening. There M. de Voltaire found himself much better, and the presence of Madame du Châtelet completed his recovery. In a few days she made him resume all his usual gayety, and forget the tribulations he had experienced on his journey from Paris.

"Thus it was that M. de Voltaire cured himself of a malady which probably would have had graver consequences if he had delivered himself up to the Æsculapius of Châlons. His principle was that our health often depends upon ourselves; that its three pivots are sobriety,

temperance in all things, and moderate exercise; that in almost all the diseases, which are not the result of very serious accidents, or of radical vitiation of the internal organs, it suffices to aid nature, which is endeavoring to restore us; that it is necessary to confine ourselves to a diet more or less severe and prolonged, suitable liquid nourishment, and other simple means. In this manner I always saw him regulate his conduct as long as I lived with him."

The events related in these passages from the graphic Longchamp occurred between January, 1746, and September, 1748, when Voltaire rejoined madame at the mimic court of Stanislas, at Lunéville. One of his "anecdotes," which he tells circumstantially, and with a great number of names of persons concerned, has a particular interest for Americans, because it relates to the Count d'Estaing, who commanded a French fleet in American waters during the Revolutionary War, and afterwards died upon the guillotine in the French Revolution. This nobleman, still a young man when Longchamp left the service of Voltaire, had run so deeply into debt that there appeared no resource left to him but to sell his paternal estates, and reduce himself to absolute penury. Voltaire, one of the largest creditors, undertook to save the lands and put the young man's debts in a train of liquidation. He bought enough of the debts, at a serious reduction, to constitute him the chief creditor, and thus secured the legal right to control the affair. Other debts he arranged to pay at various periods, and converted others into annuities. By these and other devices he saved the estate entire, and enabled the count, while still enjoying a sufficient revenue, to relieve it from incumbrance within a reasonable time. "Often," adds Longchamp, "I have seen M. d'Estaing at the house of M. de Voltaire, whom he regarded as his best friend, and he said openly to those who talked to him of his affairs that if there remained to him something of his ancient fortune he was indebted for it to M. de Voltaire alone."¹

¹ 2 Mémoires sur Voltaire et sur ses Œuvres, par Longchamp et Wagnière, ses Secrétaires, 115 to 223. Paris, 1826.

CHAPTER XLV.

DEATH OF MADAME DU CHÂTELET.

PERHAPS it is fortunate for civilization that so many of the most conspicuous men of that century managed their relations with women so badly as they did. Their intense and shameful sufferings instruct the student of the art of living. We see them expecting to enjoy the good of women without paying the just price of that good. We see them shunning the salutary restraints of marriage, and enduring inconveniences ten times greater. The illustrious Goethe, a rover and a libertine from his youth, after shrinking from marriage with a kind of horror, found himself, in his declining years, mated to his inferior, a bloated drunkard, who transmitted her despotic appetite to their son; and that son, in his turn, became its abject slave, and died miserably in the prime of his life. Voltaire we have seen figuring for sixteen years as part of the baggage of a wild marchioness, enduring more than the cost and worry of married life, while enjoying very little of its peace, happiness, and dignity, and nothing at all of its greatest charm.

His long bondage was now to end in a catastrophe compounded of the farcical and the tragic. Nature cannot be cheated. Of all the multitudes of men who have attempted to steal a good, not one has ever succeeded; perpetual motion is not more impossible. In the affairs of sex, nature, so far as we can discern, has but one object, the production and due custody of superior offspring. She seems to regard nothing else as of the slightest importance; and since the production and due custody of even one child demands the affectionate coöperation of both parents for an average life-time, every healthy sexual instinct tends to life-long marriage. Nature will not be cheated in a matter of supreme importance. She bore much from this ill-regulated Du Châtelet, but turned upon her at last to wreak a sudden and horrible vengeance.

Madame du Châtelet recorded the decline of Voltaire's affection for her with great candor. She introduces the topic into her "Reflections upon Happiness."

"I received from God [she tells us] one of those tender and immovable souls that know not how either to disguise or moderate their passions; whose love knows neither decline nor disgust, and the tenacity of which is such as to resist everything, even the certainty of being loved no more. Yet I was happy for ten years through the love of him who had subjugated my soul, and those ten years I passed at his side without any moment of disgust or languor. When age, maladies, possibly also the satiety of enjoyment, had lessened his fondness, it was long before I perceived it. I loved for two; I passed my entire life with him; and my heart, free from suspicion, enjoyed the pleasure of loving and the illusion of believing myself loved. It is true that I lost that happy condition, and not without it costing me many tears. Terrible shocks are necessary to break such chains; the wound at my heart bled a long time. I had reason to complain, and I forgave all. I was even just enough to feel that, perhaps, in the whole world there was only my heart which had that immutability that annihilates the power of time. I thought, too, that if age and sickness had not entirely extinguished his desires they would still have been for me, and his love would have returned to me; and, finally, that his heart, though incapable of love, cherished for me the most tender friendship, and would have consecrated to me his life. The absolute impossibility of the return of his taste and of his passion, which I well knew was not in the nature of things, led my heart insensibly to the gentle sentiment of friendship; and that sentiment, joined to my passion for study, rendered me sufficiently happy."¹

Which means that she had found another lover. At the distance of a day's ride eastward from Cirey was Lunéville, the principal seat of Stanislas, "King of Poland," father-in-law to the King of France, and Duke of Lorraine. He was an indolent, good-natured old gentleman, now a little past seventy, who amused himself by maintaining a court in the style then accepted in Europe as the true royal mode. That is to say, he kept a confessor and a mistress; he went to mass every morning; he was scrupulously polite to his wife; he corresponded with authors, wrote books, founded an Academy, gave prizes for poems, loved the drama, and doted upon Voltaire. His court, too, was a centre of intrigues, which were

¹ *Lettres Inédites de Madame la Marquise du Châtelet.* Paris, 1806. Page 369.

as active and virulent as those of courts where a hundred times as much of the public money was wasted. Voltaire had been an occasional visitor at Lunéville for many years; but it was one of those petty court intrigues that drew him thither as a more established inmate.

The king, as Voltaire has recorded, "shared his soul between his mistress, the Marquise de Boufflers, and a Jesuit named Menou, the most intriguing and audacious priest I have ever known. This man had beguiled from King Stanislas, through the importunities of his wife, whom he governed, about a million francs, part of which he employed in building a magnificent house for himself and some Jesuits in the town of Nancy. This house was endowed with a revenue of twenty-four thousand francs, of which twelve thousand were for Menou's table, and twelve thousand were at his disposal. The mistress was far from being so well treated. She drew from the King of Poland scarcely money enough to buy her petticoats, and yet the Jesuit coveted her portion, and was furiously jealous of the marquise. They were openly embroiled. Every day the king had much trouble, on going out from the mass, to reconcile his mistress and his confessor. At length, our Jesuit, having heard Madame du Châtelet spoken of as a woman well formed and still handsome enough, conceived the project of putting her in Madame de Boufflers's place. Stanislas occasionally composed some sufficiently bad little works, and Menou believed that a woman who was an author would succeed better with him than another. It was he who came to Cirey to begin this game. He cajoled Madame du Châtelet, and told us that King Stanislas would be enchanted to see us. He returned to say to the king that we burned with desire to pay our court to him."

And, indeed, as Longchamp has already informed us, madame, from 1747, found herself very much at home at the little court, where all her talents were agreeably exercised. She acted, sang, danced, played, conversed, and translated Newton. But it was Voltaire who captivated the benevolent old king. "We attached ourselves," he says, "to Madame de Boufflers, and the Jesuit had two women to combat." The king's letters to Voltaire, of which several have been preserved, are warmly eulogistic, and he praises some of his writings of this

period in a manner which casts doubts upon his orthodoxy. Stanislas published, in 1749, his little work entitled "The Christian Philosopher," which was held by good Catholics to savor of heresy. His daughter, the Queen of France, read it with emphatic disapproval, and laid the blame of it at the door of her father's favored guests. They had perverted the good old man, she thought, and she did not love Voltaire the better for it. She wrote to her father that his book was the work of an atheist, and she entertained the opinion that Voltaire and Madame du Châtelet had first lured him from the path of virtue through Madame de Boufflers, and then stifled his remorse with irreligion.¹

Voltaire soon felt this renewal of antipathy. After reaching Lunéville in September, 1748, he heard that a low burlesque of his "Sémiramis" was about to be performed at Fontainebleau. He begged the King of Poland to come to his bedside, and entreated him to forward to the queen, his daughter, a remonstrance against the sacrilege. The queen coldly replied that everything was parodied, even Virgil; parodies were in fashion; why should he complain? He then appealed to Madame de Pompadour, and she contrived to prevent the performance. Parodies, be it observed, were *not* then in fashion; they had been forbidden five years before, and the edict was still in force. Stanislas heaped favors upon the guests who amused him with such an enchanting variety of entertainments. He bestowed a solid boon upon Madame du Châtelet in 1748 by appointing her husband grand marshal of his household, at a salary of two thousand crowns per annum. He interested himself also in procuring for her son his first military commission, which was obtained about the time of this visit.

One of the officers of King Stanislas's little court was the Marquis de Saint-Lambert, afterwards celebrated as a poet, author of "Les Saisons," once rated by Frenchmen above "The Seasons" of Thomson. He was a native of Lorraine, a scion of an ancient house, though possessed of little fortune. He served for a while as an officer of Stanislas's guards, but afterwards accepted the post of grand master of the royal wardrobe. In 1747, when Madame du Châtelet first became inti-

¹ Voltaire to Richelieu, August, 1750.

mate with him, he was thirty-one years of age, a well-formed, attractive young man, not less agreeable than when, in later years, he was a favorite in the circles of Paris. She was then forty-one. They were thrown much together at Lunéville, at Commercy, another abode of the King of Poland, and at Nancy, Saint-Lambert's native place. It was not long before she became furiously in love with him. As early as the spring of 1748, she wrote him a tumultuous letter, in which she expressed her passion without the least reserve. It is evident from this burning epistle and other hot notes of the same month of May, 1748, that she was the wooer of the young man, and that he yielded to her solicitations. She assures him that her love is without bounds, and tells him that her only fear is lest he should be unable to return her passion with the entire devotion she craves.

“Come to Cirey,” she wrote, “to prove to me that I am wrong.”

He came. He was with her at Lunéville, while Voltaire was sick on the road to Paris, and this was probably the reason why, in answer to Longchamp's letters, she only sent a lackey to inquire how he was. She was urgent in her love. “Come to me as soon as you are dressed,” she writes in one flaming note; “afterwards you may ride on horseback if you wish.” In another, “I shall fly to you as soon as I have supped. Madame de Boufflers is gone to bed.” For several months this amour was in full tide without awakening the least suspicion on the part of Voltaire, who was doubtless relieved by it from some of the constraint in which he had lived. He probably owed to it his happy escape to Paris with Longchamp, and his gay meeting with old friends, untrammelled by madame's bandboxes. But the time came when he discovered it. We owe to the curious Longchamp some wondrous scenes that followed the discovery, which occurred at the château of the King of Poland at Commercy, twenty miles from Cirey: —

“One evening, M. de Voltaire, having come down-stairs before being called to supper, entered Madame du Châtelet's rooms without having been announced, there being no servant in the ante-chamber. He traversed the whole suite without meeting any one, and reached at length a small room at the end, half lighted by one candle.

There he saw, or thought he saw, Madame du Châtelet and M. de Saint-Lambert . . . conversing upon something besides verses and philosophy. Struck with astonishment and indignation, unable to control his feelings, he broke out into violent reproaches. M. de Saint-Lambert, without being disconcerted, observed that it seemed to him very singular that any one should give himself airs to censure his conduct; if that conduct displeased any one, the person offended had but to leave the château, and he would follow, in order to explain himself in a suitable place. M. de Voltaire went out furious, ascended to his room, and ordered me to go at once to find a post-chaise that could be hired or bought, his own having been left at Paris; adding that, after having found it, I should get post-horses put to it, and bring it to the gate of the château. He said he was resolved to return to Paris that very night.

“Amazed at a departure so precipitate, of which I had not heard a word the evening before, and unable to divine the cause, I went in search of Madame du Châtelet, to inform her of the order I had just received, and try to learn from her what was the motive of it. She told me that M. de Voltaire was a flighty man [*un visionnaire*], who had burst into a passion because he had found M. de Saint-Lambert in her room. It was necessary, she added, to prevent his leaving and making an outcry, and that I must evade executing the commission which he had given me in a moment of fury. She would know how to appease him; it was necessary to let him discharge his first fire, and try only to keep him in his room the next day.

“I did not return to his room until toward two o'clock in the morning, when I told him that in all Commercy I had not been able to find a carriage, either for hire or sale. His servants lodged in the city; I slept alone in a small room near his chamber. Before going to bed, he drew from a secretary a small bag of money, which he gave me, saying that, after having rested, I was to go, at the dawn of day, hire a post-horse and ride to Nancy, whence I should bring him a carriage suited to his purpose. Seeing that he was still in the same resolution, I wished to give notice of it to Madame du Châtelet. Before retiring, I descended secretly to her room, where she was still occupied in writing. On seeing me, she first asked if M. de Voltaire was a little more tranquil. I replied that he appeared to be still irritated; that he had just gone to bed; but that probably he would sleep little during the night. Thereupon she dismissed me, saying that she was going up to speak to him.

“I returned softly to my little room. A few minutes after some one knocked, and I ran, with a candle, to open the door for madame,

and to announce her to M. de Voltaire. Seeing me half undressed, he did not suspect that I had been forewarned of this visit. She entered the chamber almost at the same time as myself, and took a seat upon the foot of his bed. After having lighted two candles I withdrew; but I could hear part of their conversation through the very thin wall which separated me from the chamber; and, since the death of Madame du Châtelet, I have heard some details from Mademoiselle du Thil, her intimate confidante. While I was still with them, madame first addressed him in English, repeating a pet name in that language which she ordinarily called him by. After I was gone she spoke in French, and did what she could to soften him and excuse herself.

“‘What,’ said he, ‘you wish me to believe you after what I have seen! I have exhausted my health, my fortune; I have sacrificed all for you; and you deceive me!’

“‘No,’ she replied, ‘I love you always; but for a long time you have complained that you are sick, that your strength abandons you; I am extremely afflicted at it; I am very far from wishing your death; your health is very dear to me; no one in the world takes more interest in it than I do. On your part, you have always shown much interest in mine; you have known and approved the regimen which suits it; you have even favored and shared it as long as it was in your power to do so. Since you agree that you could not continue to take care of it except to your great damage, ought you to be offended that it is one of your friends who supplies your place?’

“‘Ah, madame,’ said he, ‘you are always right; but since things must be as they are, at least let them not pass before my eyes.’

“After half an hour’s conversation, madame, seeing that he was a little more calm, bade him adieu with an embrace, and urged him to give himself up to repose. She then retired.

“She had already taken much trouble to appease M. de Saint-Lambert, who still wished to have satisfaction for the insult which he pretended to have received from M. de Voltaire. She succeeded in mollifying him, and she determined him even to take measures for the restoration of good-will between them, persuading him that this was his duty, were it only from deference to the age of M. de Voltaire. The latter, after the interview with madame, slept for some hours, and did not leave his rooms that day. Toward evening, M. de Saint-Lambert called, alleging that he was anxious concerning the health of M. de Voltaire. Astonished to see him, I went to announce him to M. de Voltaire, who permitted him to enter. The young man, approaching with a modest air, began by apologizing for the words, a little animated, which had escaped him in a moment of trouble and agitation.

Scarcely was his sentence finished, when M. de Voltaire seized him with both hands, embraced him, and said, —

“My child, I have forgotten all, and it was I who was in the wrong. You are in the happy age of love and delight. Enjoy those moments, too brief. An old man, an invalid, like me is not made for the pleasures.”

“The next day all three supped together as usual. A few days after this adventure, M. de Voltaire began to compose a comedy in one act and in verse, wherein all that had happened was delineated under a veil of allegory. The characters, the passions, were depicted in it with as much energy as truth. The author judged it proper to suppress the manuscript of this piece, some verses of which are to be found in ‘Nanine,’ another comedy, which was also written at Com-mercy some time after.”

The autumn of 1748 rolled away. Voltaire, having recovered his health and composure, designed to spend part of the winter at Paris, where he hoped to see “Sémiramis” revived, to present to the public a new tragedy, and submit to the King of France some chapters of his history of the late campaigns. Madame was to leave her young lover for a while, and accompany her old “friend” to the capital; not to share his expected triumphs at the theatre and the court, but to finish at Paris her version of Newton’s “Principia,” with the aid of M. Clairaut, her instructor in mathematics.

“Before going to Paris [continues Longchamp] she desired to arrange a matter of business with one of her farmers near Châlons; whence she proposed to go on to Cirey, in order to audit the accounts of the men who had the management of her foundries and forests. Both having taken leave of the King of Poland, they set out from Lunéville toward the middle of December, 1748. On approaching Châlons at eight o’clock in the morning, Madame la Marquise was very far from stopping to take a bowl of broth at the inn. She was driven to the country-house of the bishop, whom she knew to be at home. He received our travelers with pleasure, and caused a good breakfast to be served to them. Madame’s farmer, notified by one of the postilions, came to meet her there, and the regulation of his account was neither long nor difficult. At the same time the other postilion had been charged to bring a change of horses by half past nine at the very latest.

“The farmer having gone, madame took a fancy, while waiting for the horses, to propose to some gentlemen who were at the bishop’s

house to play a game of comet or cavagnole, games then in fashion. They yielded to her desire, and play began. It was much prolonged. Meanwhile the horses were at the door, and the postilions, tired of waiting, sent in to say that if the travelers were not going to start they would take the horses back to the stable. They received orders in reply to do so, since the travelers would not set out till after dinner, and to bring the horses back at two o'clock. The postilions executed punctually these orders; but, dinner over, madame and her friends began again to play at comet. The game was long. It was raining. The postilions, chilled to the bone in the rain, did not cease to crack their whips in the most furious manner. That game over, Madame du Châtelet, who was on the losing side, asked her revenge. Another game was begun. Then the postilions, losing all patience, swore like mired cartmen; and if they had been their own masters they would have abandoned their horses. To quiet them they were told to put the horses into the stables of the château, and were assured that the time lost would be amply paid for. At length, the day was entirely spent. It was eight o'clock in the evening. Then M. de Voltaire, to whom this delay was not agreeable, and Madame du Châtelet, who cared nothing about it, thanked and took leave of the very obliging prelate, and resumed their journey.

"It had rained all day; the weather was still bad and the night very dark. Mounted upon a large white horse, I rode on before to have the relays ready for them. It was not possible for me to see two paces ahead, and unfortunately, while directing my horse by chance, I got out of the middle of the road, and went headlong into the ditch. Losing my seat, I was precipitated over the head of the animal, and found myself stretched at length at the bottom of the ditch, with a part of the horse resting upon me. . . . The postilion who was sent to find me, having heard my cries, ran up to me and assisted me to reach the carriage. They had me placed beside the *femme de chambre*, for I was bruised and could no longer ride on horseback. I reached Cirey, suffering much pain and in a miserable condition; but rest and the care lavished upon me restored me, and prevented the serious results which the accident might have had, some of the consequences of which I felt for several years.

"Two or three days sufficed for madame to transact the business which brought her to Cirey before going to Paris, where she expected to pass the winter. When not studying she was always lively, active, and good-humored. In the midst of her preparations for departure she appeared all at once abstracted, melancholy, restless. She had discovered, from various symptoms, that she was in a way to become a mother again, at the age of forty-four years. She was terrified at the

prospect. How to conceal her condition and its consequences, and especially from M. du Châtelet?

“M. de Voltaire, struck with a change in her demeanor, so sudden and so extraordinary, asked her with concern what was the reason of it. She gave it without hesitation. He was not very much astonished. The information could not give him pleasure; but, on learning it, he thought only of tranquillizing Madame du Châtelet, and preventing its affecting her to the point of making her sick. He told her that there was no occasion for despair, and nothing in her case at all supernatural. It became them, he said, to consider the matter coolly, with good sense and prudence, and decide what was the best course to take in the circumstances. His advice was, first of all, to send for M. de Saint-Lambert, that they might all three take part in the deliberation. Informed by M. de Voltaire of the business in hand, M. de Saint-Lambert was at Cirey the day after he received the notification.

“A council was immediately held. A mischance which seemed to be of a nature to displease equally each of the three personages, as parties in interest, and to separate them forever, served, on the contrary, only to unite them the more. The event, serious as it was, was even turned into jest. Nevertheless, they considered first if there was any way of concealing from the public, and, above all, from M. du Châtelet, the condition of madame and its natural consequence. It was decided that both her character and propriety forbade the long and indispensable precautions which such a scheme would involve; and even were she capable of submitting to them the least indiscretion, the merest accident, might cause the plan to fail. The questions then arose how the pregnancy should be announced, and to what father the child should be assigned; which latter seemed very embarrassing to M. de Saint-Lambert and to Madame du Châtelet.

“‘As to that,’ said M. de Voltaire, ‘we will put it among the miscellaneous works [*œuvres mêlées*] of Madame du Châtelet.’

“On discussing the thing more gravely, it was agreed not to falsify the legal axiom, that *he is the father whom the nuptial relation indicates*, and that the child belonged of right to M. du Châtelet. To him, then, it was resolved to give the child; but the difficulty was to make him accept it. All being well weighed and deliberated, they agreed that madame should write at once to her husband, who was then at Dijon (one hundred and twenty miles distant), and invite him to come immediately to Cirey to arrange some family business, so as to avoid a lawsuit with which she was threatened. She pressed him to come also for the purpose of receiving the money she had collected at Cirey for the expenses of the next campaign, adding that, if the

war continued, he was to have a higher grade, which she had assisted to obtain for him by her influence.

“The marquis flew to Cirey, where he was received with lively demonstrations of tenderness and regard on the part of his wife, as well as of respect and joy on that of his vassals. He was rejoiced to find there M. de Voltaire and M. de Saint-Lambert, who neglected nothing that could render his visit to his estate agreeable, despite the season. He was flattered with so much cordiality, seemed extremely cheerful, and responded by unequivocal marks of friendship. Madame invited several noblemen of the neighborhood to spend some days at the château to augment the satisfaction of her husband. They gave him little *fêtes*, and even theatricals. During the first days she employed a great part of the morning with him arranging the affairs of the house, while the guests were hunting. At dinner great cheer was made. The marquis performed well his part at table, having previously gained a good appetite in going to see his farmers and inspecting his forges and his woods. After dinner they had cards and other amusements; but nothing surpassed supper in agreeableness and gayety. All the guests were in the best humor, and testified their delight in seeing M. du Châtelet again. Every one talked with the greatest freedom of whatever interested him, and M. le Marquis du Châtelet related some stories of the last campaign in Flanders. They seemed to listen to him with great interest, and he was much flattered by it. They let him talk and drink as much as he liked. When he ceased, others told pleasant tales, said good things, and gave some curious anecdotes. M. de Voltaire went beyond all the rest, and heightened the general gayety by the drollest and most diverting stories.

“Madame du Châtelet, who on that day was dressed with extreme elegance, sat next her husband, and said some agreeable and happy things to him, paid him, without affectation, pretty little attentions, which he took in good part, and to which he responded by addressing flattering compliments to his wife. M. de Voltaire and M. de Saint-Lambert exchanged glances, and secretly rejoiced to see that all was going so well. Indeed, during dessert the marquis was in a beautiful humor, and became entirely gallant. His wife appeared in his eyes such as he had beheld her at twenty. He felt himself transported back to the same age, and played the young man. . . . During this little conjugal colloquy the other guests, animated by champagne, talked loudly of hunting, fishing, horses, and dogs. But M. de Voltaire and M. de Saint-Lambert, interested in another matter, read with great pleasure in the face of M. du Châtelet, and still better in the eyes of his wife, that their project would be accomplished accord-

ing to their intention. In fact, from that night the pair occupied the same suite of rooms. Nothing was neglected to sustain the illusion during the following days. They kept the marquis in play. Pleasure followed pleasure, and his lovely humor was maintained in the midst of the gayety by which he was surrounded. Three weeks and more passed in a kind of enchantment, and then madame declared to her husband that, from certain signs, she had reason to believe herself *enceinte*.

"At this news M. du Châtelet thought he should faint with joy. He sprang to the neck of his wife, embraced her, and went to communicate what he had heard to all his friends who were in the château. Every one congratulated him, and called upon madame to testify the interest they took in their mutual satisfaction. The news was immediately spread into the neighboring villages. Gentlemen, lawyers, large farmers, came to compliment M. du Châtelet. He received them all to admiration. Perhaps he was secretly flattered to prove to them that he could still be of service elsewhere than in the field. This gave occasion to new rejoicings at Cirey. At length the time arrived for M. du Châtelet to return to his post, and he took his departure. M. de Saint-Lambert went back to Lunéville. Madame la Marquise and M. de Voltaire renewed preparations for their journey to Paris. All four set out from Cirey, well content with what had passed there."

Thus, Longchamp. On reading his unique narrative we naturally turn to the correspondence of the characters who figure in it, to see if it harmonizes with his statements. We find that it does. December 1, 1748, Voltaire wrote at Lunéville to the D'Argentals at Paris, "Divine angels, I shall be under your wings at Christmas." This accords with Longchamp's information that they left Lunéville for Paris toward the middle of December, intending to make but a brief stay at Cirey for business only. *Something* not expected detained them there until the end of January, 1749. January 21st, Voltaire wrote to D'Argental from Cirey, "Madame du Châtelet has just finished a preface to her Newton, which is a *chef d'œuvre*." January 26th, he wrote from Cirey a long letter to the King of Prussia, and did not begin to send letters from Paris until February. Thus, ample time was afforded (six weeks) for the performance of the amazing comedy described by a secretary of inquiring mind.

More than this, Voltaire's presence in Paris, during all that

long period of detention in the country, was vehemently desired by his friends, and particularly by his guardian angels, the D'Argentals, ever watchful for his interest. The actors and the public were waiting for his coming with impatience that "Sémiramis" might be revived, with the author's last corrections and improvements. Never before had the clique hostile to him been more active, more resolute, more hopeful; and a tragedy was his favorite means both of offense and defense. D'Argental wrote urgently for his coming. Madame du Châtelet, as we have observed, was one of those ladies who can look out from the warm shelter of an elegant room, and bear, with perfect equanimity for many hours, the inconveniences suffered by postilions in the piercing rain of a French December. She was hard put to it on the present occasion to account for this unforeseen delay in a manner that would satisfy the Count d'Argental. January 13th, she wrote to him, "If I thought that the presence of M. de Voltaire was necessary at Paris, I would leave everything to bring him thither; but, in truth, I think it is best to keep the public fasting with regard to 'Sémiramis,' so that they may long for it as it merits. I am sure of M. de Richelieu, and know that the parody upon 'Sémiramis' will not be played. These are my principal reasons for not abandoning the very essential and tedious business which I am transacting at Cirey. A forge-master who is leaving, another who takes possession, some woods to examine, some disputes to reconcile, — all that, without losing a moment, cannot be accomplished before the end of the month."¹

All of which confirms the narrative of Longchamp.

They were established, then, at the Du Châtelet mansion in Paris early in February, 1749. Each of them was at once absorbed in intellectual labor, madame being passionately intent upon completing her Newton before returning to the country on a less agreeable errand. Were they really on as cordial terms as before? They were always liable to tiffs and scenes; and if age had cooled Voltaire's temperament it does not appear to have quieted his nerves. Let Longchamp relate two scenes between them at Paris, which occurred while the lady was closeted daily and nightly with her professor of mathematics, reading proofs and verifying algebra: —

¹ Lettres, page 481.

FIRST SCENE.

“Upon their return to Paris, madame plunged again into the sciences, and invited M. Clairaut, of the Academy of Sciences, to come and examine her work upon Newton and go over the calculations. M. Clairaut came every day, and went with her to a room in the second story, where they shut themselves up in order not to be interrupted. There they passed a great part of the day, and in the evening they usually supped with M. de Voltaire, who then kept house, and occupied rooms on the first floor. For some days he had not been well, and complained that his digestion was out of order. When that was the case, his usual remedy was to confine himself to a strict diet, and drink abundantly of very weak tea.

“One day, when his affairs had obliged him to take several walks in Paris, finding in the evening that he had gained a little appetite, he asked to have supper somewhat earlier than usual, and told me to go and call the two learned persons, Madame du Châtelet and M. Clairaut. Madame, who was deep in a calculation which she wished to finish, asked a respite of a quarter of an hour. M. de Voltaire consents, and waits patiently. Half an hour passes, and no one comes. He makes me go up-stairs again. I knock, and they cry out to me, ‘We are just coming down!’ Upon receiving this answer, M. de Voltaire has the soup brought in, and takes his seat at the table, expecting the company immediately. But they come not, and the plates are getting cold. Then he gets up, furious, rushes up the stairs, and, finding their door locked, he gives it a tremendous kick. At this noise, being obliged to leave their work, the two geometers rise and follow him with some confusion. As they were going down-stairs he said to them, ‘You are then in a conspiracy to kill me?’ Usually their supper was cheerful and very long, but that night it was very short; scarcely anything was eaten; each of them, with eyes fixed upon his plate, said not a word. M. Clairaut left early, and it was some time before he came to the house again.”

SECOND SCENE.

“M. de Voltaire went to bed, but could not sleep all night, so much was he excited by the events of the evening. The next morning, madame sent some one to his room to ask how he was, and to know if he desired her to come and breakfast with him. He answered that if she wished to come she should be well received. A moment after, madame came down, holding in her hand a superb cup and saucer of Saxony porcelain, which he had given her, and which she loved to use. They were very large, all gilt inside, and the outside adorned with a landscape containing a great number of figures very well painted,

which formed some charming pictures, as well from the elegance of the design as from the brilliancy of the coloring. M. de Voltaire told me to pour into it some coffee and cream, which having done I withdrew. Madame, while sipping her coffee, began to speak to him of what had passed the evening before, reproaching him for his quickness of temper and excusing herself for keeping him waiting. She was standing with her cup in her hand, and, while sipping and talking, she had come very near the *fauteuil* on which he was seated. Suddenly he rose, as if to make room for her to sit beside him, and, in rising, he struck madame with his left shoulder, which caused the cup and saucer to fall from her hands and break into a thousand pieces. Roused by this noise, I reëntered. Madame, much attached to this little article, and having quite as quick a temper as M. de Voltaire, said to him in English some words which I did not understand, and, without waiting for his reply, went up to her room, extremely irritated, as it seemed to me.

“As soon as she was gone out, M. de Voltaire called me, told me to pick up the pieces and put them upon the table. He chooses one of the largest pieces, and tells me to go at once to the shop of M. la Frenaye, jeweler, to buy a cup and saucer exactly like the fragment, if he has one such. At the same time he gives me a little bag of money to pay him. But among all the porcelains which adorned the shop, I found not one cup of the pattern I wished. Having chosen one of those which seemed most like it, I asked the price. Ten louis. The bag was two or three louis short of this sum, and I asked M. la Frenaye to send one of his men with three or four of his most beautiful breakfast cups, that M. de Voltaire might choose the one he liked best. The man brought six. Having selected the most elegant, and at the same time the most expensive, M. de Voltaire haggled much about the price; but gained nothing by it, the man protesting that ten louis was the cost price, and that it was impossible to abate anything. M. de Voltaire finished by counting out to the man the ten louis, not without regretting the expense, and saying between his teeth that madame ought to have taken her coffee in her own room before coming down to his. Nevertheless, he sent me to make his excuses for his ill-temper, and to carry her this new coffee-cup, which she received with a smile. Their reconciliation was prompt, and this little disturbance had no after-effects.”

The weeks flew by, as only time can fly which is spent in mental labor. Madame might well be excused for keeping her companion waiting for his supper. She spared herself no more than she considered him. She was under a terrible pressure. She worked upon her Newton as ambitious or procrastinating

students work during the ten days before their final examination. She wrote, at the same time, burning letters to her absent lover, lamenting her long detention, and explaining its cause.

[May 18, 1749.] "No; it is not possible for my heart to express to you how it adores you. Do not reproach me for my Newton; I am sufficiently punished for it. Never have I made a greater sacrifice to reason than in remaining here to finish it; it is a frightful labor, — one that demands a head and health of iron. . . . *Mon Dieu!* how amiable M. du Châtelet is to have offered to take you with him [to Cirey]!"

[May 20th.] "My departure hence does not depend absolutely upon me, but upon Clairaut and the difficulty of my work. I sacrifice everything to it, even my shape, and I beg you to remember it if you find me changed. Do you know the life I have led since the departure of the king? I get up at nine, sometimes at eight; I work till three; then I take my coffee; I resume work at four; at ten I stop to eat a morsel alone; I talk till midnight with M. de Voltaire, who comes to supper with me, and at midnight I go to work again, and keep on till five in the morning. . . . I must do this, or else I must either renounce the idea of lying in at Lunéville, or lose the fruit of my labors if I should die in child-bed. . . . With regard to the fear you have of being alone with M. du Châtelet, it does not depend entirely upon me to secure you against it; and if you prefer seeing me ten or twelve days later to risking that accident I have nothing to say. . . . I can love nothing but what I share with you; for, at least, I do not love Newton. I finish it from reason and honor; but I love only you."¹

This work upon Newton, published in 1756 by her distinguished teacher, Alexis Clairaut, in two quarto volumes, involved very severe and long-continued toil. She attempted in it to do for Newton's "Principia" what Mrs. Somerville afterwards accomplished for the Astronomy of Laplace. She translated the Latin into French, and amplified the demonstrations so as to bring the work within the grasp of advanced French students of mathematics. The title finally given it by M. Clairaut was "The Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy." How much of the work was done by the teacher and how much by the pupil will never be known. At the end of May she saw her last of Paris, and went to pass the

¹ Lettres. Paris. 1878. Page 487.

lovely days of June at beautiful Cirey, her work still incomplete.

They spent most of the summer at Lunéville, where madame chose that her child should be born, because there its father could be near her at the critical time. Both Voltaire and herself continued to labor with an intensity which was extraordinary even for them. At Lunéville, being separated from his books and papers, and kept long waiting for the expected child, he had no resource but in original composition. The Duchess du Maine had suggested to him a subject for a new tragedy, the Conspiracy of Catiline, recently treated by the aged Crébillon. He thought of it during these summer weeks of tedious waiting. Kindled by the project of his Paris enemies to exalt above him the veteran dramatist just mentioned, whose "Catiline," despite all their efforts, had signally failed, he now had one of his frenzies of inspiration, and wrote in eight days and nights his tragedy of "Rome Saved." It was a wonderful feat. Every other day, he says, madame looked up from her Newton to be astounded by his bringing in two new acts. But here is one of his own accounts of the mad fit, written August 12, 1749, at Lunéville, to D'Argental: —

"Read, only read, what I send you! You are going to be astonished; I am, myself. On the 3d of the present month the devil, saving your grace, took possession of me, and said, Avenge Cicero and France; wash away your country's shame! He enlightened me; he made me imagine the wife of Catiline, etc. This devil is a good devil, my angels; yourselves would not do better. He made me work day and night. I thought I should die of it; but what does that matter? In eight days, — yes, in eight days, and not in nine, — Catiline has been done; and the first scenes, very nearly as first written, I send you. It is all done in the rough, and I am quite exhausted. I shall send it to you, as you may well believe, as soon as I have put the last hand to it. You will see in it no amorous Tullia, no go-between Cicero; but you will see a terrible picture of Rome. I shudder at it still. Fulvia will rend your heart. You will adore Cicero. How you will love Cæsar! How you will say, This is Cato's self! And Lucullus, Crassus, what shall we say of them? Oh, my dear angels, 'Mérope' is scarcely a tragedy in comparison. But let us employ eight weeks in correcting what we have done in eight days. Believe me, believe me, *this* is the true tragedy!"

[Again, August 16th.] "This post ought to convey to my divine angels a cargo of the first two acts of *Catiline*. But why entitle the work *Catiline*? Cicero is the real hero of it: he it is whose glory I wished to avenge; it was he who inspired me, he whom I tried to imitate, and who occupies all the fifth act. I pray you, let us call the piece Cicero and *Catiline*."

The heat of creation having subsided, he labored more peacefully at correcting his work, keeping an eye ever upon Paris, and beginning already to make partisans for the new play by giving early accounts of its progress. The Duchess du Maine was of course promptly notified. The President Hénault, a French Horace Walpole, rich, critical, and friendly, was amply advised. The zealous Marmontel was not overlooked. The author, meanwhile, on surveying his work more at leisure, found abundant faults in it, and did, in fact, spend much more than eight weeks in correcting the composition of eight days.

August drew towards its close, and still madame kept them waiting. The officers and servants of the King of Poland did not all appreciate the merits of guests who stayed so long, increased their labors, and, perhaps, in some instances, curtailed their perquisites. One M. Alliot, aulic councilor, administrator of the king's household, did not approve the system of M. de Voltaire in confining himself so much to his own rooms, instead of taking sustenance in the usual place. He was slack in supplying a frenzied tragic poet with such homely necessaries as "bread, wine, and candles." But he found that the tragic poet was a person who knew his rights as a king's guest. Voltaire wrote an exquisitely polite letter to M. Alliot, informing him that at the court of his majesty of Prussia he was not obliged "to importune every day for bread, wine, and candles." "Permit me to say to you," he added, "that it belongs to the dignity of the King of Poland and the honor of your administration not to refuse these trifling attentions to an officer of the court of the King of France, who has the honor to pay his respects to the King of Poland."

This note was ostentatiously dated "August 29th, at a quarter past nine in the morning." He waited just half an hour. Receiving no answer, he wrote to the king himself, dating his letter "August 29th, at a quarter to ten in the morning."

“Sire, when we are in Paradise, it is necessary for us to address ourselves to God. Your majesty has permitted me to pay you my court until the end of autumn, when I shall not be able to avoid taking leave of your majesty. Your majesty is aware that I am very sick, and that unceasing labors, not less than my continual sufferings, retain me in my own rooms. I am compelled to beseech your majesty to give orders that the director of your majesty’s household shall condescend to pay me those attentions, necessary and suitable to the dignity of your abode, with which your majesty honors foreigners who come to your court. Kings, from the time of Alexander, have had it in charge to nourish men of letters; and when Virgil was in the house of Augustus *Alliotus*, aulic councilor to Augustus, caused Virgil to be supplied with bread, wine, and candles. I am sick to-day, and have neither bread nor wine for dinner. I have the honor to be, with profound respect, sire, of your majesty, the very humble servant.”

The wine, the bread, and the candles were not again withheld by an aulic councilor, the king having given orders to that effect. Madame Alliot, we are informed, was extremely *sotte* and superstitious, and did not enjoy this irruption of French pagans into a quiet château with a chapel and a daily mass. One day she chanced to be in the same room with Voltaire while a frightful thunder-storm was passing over Lunéville, and she did not conceal her apprehension that his presence much enhanced the danger the château was in from a vengeful bolt. “Madame,” said he, pointing to the sky, “I have thought and written more good of him whom you are so much afraid of than you will be able to say of him in the whole of your life.”¹

So passed these summer months. September came in. Madame du Châtelet still labored assiduously at her Newton, not neglecting her part in amusing the good-natured old king. Gay as she seemed, she was not, as Longchamp assures us, without occasional fears. She sent to Paris for her old friend, Mademoiselle du Thil, who obeyed her summons. She arranged her papers, and had them divided into parcels, which she caused to be sealed and directed. She made Longchamp promise to deliver them to their addresses if she should not survive. September 4th her child was born. All went as favorably as possible, and Voltaire wrote three merry notes to convey the news to anxious friends in Paris.

¹ 73 Œuvres de Voltaire, 46. Note by another hand.

“This evening [he wrote to the Abbé de Voisenon] Madame du Châtelet, being at her desk, according to her laudable custom, said, ‘*But I feel something!*’ That something was a little girl, who came into the world forthwith. It was placed upon a volume of geometry which happened to be lying near, and the mother has gone to bed. As for me, not knowing what to do during the last part of her pregnancy, I set myself to make a child all alone, and in eight days was delivered of ‘*Catiline*.’ It was a jest of nature to wish that I should accomplish in a week what Crébillon took thirty years to do. I am astonished at the accouchement of Madame du Châtelet, and terrified at my own. I know not if madame will imitate me and be pregnant again; but as soon as I was delivered of ‘*Catiline*’ I had a new pregnancy, and produced upon the spot an ‘*Electre*’” [another subject of Crébillon’s].

In the same light tone he wrote to other friends that night, while, as he said, mother and child “slept like dormice.” “I am a hundred times more fatigued than she is,” he wrote to D’Argental.

For four days she continued to do well. The child was christened in the chapel, and given out to nurse, after the French custom. The fourth day was very warm, and the mother, being slightly feverish, felt the heat extremely. She told her *femme de chambre* to bring her some iced *orgeat*, a favorite summer drink of the time, made of almond paste, sugar, and water. Persons near her bed remonstrated urgently. She insisted, and drank of the ice-cold liquid a large tumblerful. Alarming symptoms immediately declared themselves. Doctors were summoned; her husband was sent for. Powerful remedies having relieved her, again every one hoped for her speedy restoration. Two days passed. September 10th, late in the evening, Voltaire, the Marquis du Châtelet, and other friends were seated at the supper-table of Madame de Boufflers, in another part of the château. Saint-Lambert and Longchamp watched in the sick-room. All of them were relieved and cheerful. Suddenly, ominous sounds were heard from the bed, — a rattling, hiccoughs, a struggle for breath. They rushed to her side. She seemed to have fainted. They raised her, gave her the vinaigrette, rubbed her feet, struck her hands, and employed all the usual remedies. She never breathed again. She was dead when they reached her bedside.

From the merriment of the supper-table Voltaire, the hus-

band, and all the guests, upon hearing the awful and unexpected tidings, ran to the chamber. The consternation was such as we should imagine. To sobs and exclamations of grief and horror a mournful silence succeeded. M. du Châtelet was led out; the other guests went away; and, finally, the two men who had most reason for emotion remained alone by the side of the bed, speechless and overwhelmed. Voltaire staggered out of the room like a man stunned and bewildered, and made his way, he knew not how, to the great door of the chateau, at the head of the outside steps. At the bottom of those steps he fell headlong, close to a sentry-box, and remained on the ground insensible. His servant, who had followed him, seeing him fall, ran down the steps, and attempted to lift him up. Saint-Lambert came, also, and assisted to get him on his feet. He recognized Saint-Lambert, and said to him, sobbing, as Longchamp reports, "Ah, my friend, it is you who have killed her for me." Then, suddenly coming to himself, as if from a deep sleep, he cried, in a tone of mingled despair and reproach, "Oh, my God, sir, what could have induced you to get her into that condition?" Saint-Lambert said nothing, and Voltaire was led away to his room.

Among the crowd of distracted persons who had rushed into the chamber on the first alarm was Madame de Boufflers. As she was going out, half an hour later, she took Longchamp aside, and told him to see if the deceased had upon her finger a cornelian locket-ring; and if she had, to take it off and keep it until further orders. He obeyed, and the next day gave the ring to Madame de Boufflers, who picked out of the locket, with a pin, a portrait of Saint-Lambert, and then gave back the ring to Longchamp, to place it among the other effects, for the Marquis du Châtelet. Two or three days after, Voltaire, being a little calmer, asked Longchamp for the same ring, which, he said, contained his own portrait. The secretary informed him that his portrait was not in the ring at the time of madame's death. "Ah!" exclaimed Voltaire, "how do you know that?" Longchamp related what had passed. "Oh, heavens!" cried Voltaire, rising to his feet and clasping his hands. "Such are women! I took Richelieu out of the ring. Saint-Lambert expelled me. That is in the order of nature; one nail drives out another. So go the things of this world!"

Longchamp, obeying the orders which madame had given him, distributed the papers she had left sealed and directed. Last of all he delivered those addressed to her husband. One of the parcels was a large case, locked, and sealed in several places, with the key in a sealed packet tied to one of the handles. Upon the cover of the case madame had written with her own hand:—

“I pray M. du Châtelet to be so good as to burn all these papers without looking at them. They can be of no use to him, and have no relation to his affairs.”

The husband, upon opening the case, was disposed to disregard this request; but his wiser brother, the Count de Lomont, who was present, told him that he ought to respect the last wishes of his wife, and not abuse the mark of confidence which she had shown him. The marquis, however, persisted in reading a few of the uppermost letters, which, says the observant Longchamp, caused him to make a wry face and shake his ears. His brother, saying that he was well paid for his curiosity, ordered a lighted candle, emptied the case into the fire-place, and set fire to the papers. There were several thick and solid packets of manuscript among the mass, which burned slowly. Longchamp, kneeling down before the fire-place to quicken the blaze, contrived to rescue, on the sly, Voltaire's “Treatise upon Metaphysics” and several letters. Even those letters were afterwards destroyed; so that of the hundreds of letters which must have passed between Voltaire and Madame du Châtelet only one trifling, jocular note of his is known to exist.

She went beyond her right in consigning some of these papers to the fire; for among the mass were important memoranda and documents, collected by Voltaire for his historical works, of which she disapproved, as well as some compositions similar to the metaphysical treatise, which she deemed unsafe for him to possess. He lamented deeply this irreparable loss, and mentions it in the preface to his “*Essai sur les Mœurs*,” with an expression of respect for her memory, which he never omitted on any fair occasion as long as he lived. From *him* the public never learned anything but good of the woman he had loved.

Madame du Châtelet was buried at Lunéville, with the

pomp and ceremonial then customary. Her child lived but for a short time, and passed away lamented by no one, — the mere incidental supernumerary of a drama in which nature meant her to be the chief personage. And these wonderful events, known to many persons immediately, brought no reproach upon any of the actors. Saint-Lambert, in the drawing-rooms of Paris, was regarded as a sort of hero of romance. "*It made him the fashion,*" says the "*Nouvelle Biographie,*" and led the way to other "conquests," and to a long career of social as well as literary distinction in the metropolis of his country. Voltaire remained on friendly, even cordial, terms with him as long as he lived, as both did with the family of the Du Châtelets. Frederic of Prussia was duly advised of what had occurred by his French correspondents. We find among his poetical writings of 1749 an epitaph upon Madame du Châtelet, to this effect: —

"Here lies one who lost her life from the double accouchement of a 'Treatise of Philosophy' and of an unfortunate infant. It is not known precisely which of the two took her from us. Upon this lamentable event what opinion ought we to follow? Saint-Lambert assigns it to the book; Voltaire says it was the child."¹

¹ 14 Œuvres de Frédéric le Grand, 169.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE WIDOWER.

IN some very bad marriages, Mr. Emerson wisely remarks, there is a fraction of true marriage. In Voltaire's connection with Madame du Châtelet, there was, on his side, a large ingredient of true marriage. To the vow which sealed their union he was faithful against the solicitations of the most seductive king in Europe. He was faithful to it when it became oppressive. He was faithful when she was faithless; and, after having been faithful to her person while she lived, he was singularly so to her name and honor after she was dead. He had loved this woman, and he lived with her in that kindly illusion which in happy marriages casts a pleasing veil over ugly faults, and sets good qualities in bright relief. Parents habitually think of their children as they appear to them in their best moments and moods. So he thought of her. There had been, moreover, a genuine communion of spirit between them, and they had often been true companions to each other. Longchamps has told us how they sat together on the carriage cushions, in the wintry night, lost in the contemplation of the starry heavens which spoke to them of Newton's immortal glory. As that incident gave dignity to a situation otherwise ridiculous, so such communion of soul, though but occasional and brief, redeemed the quality of their connection.

He was heart-broken at her loss. "Ah, my dear friend," he wrote to D'Argental on that fatal night, "I have only you left upon the earth!" It distressed him that he had written of the birth of her child in so light a tone. "Alas, madame," he wrote to the Marquise du Deffand, "we had turned that event into a jest; and it was in that unfortunate tone that I wrote, by her order, to her friends. If anything could augment the horror of my condition, it would be to have taken with gayety an adventure the result of which poisons the remainder

of my miserable life." In a similar strain he wrote to other friends during the first hours of his bereavement. Longchamp testifies that the death of his Emilie overwhelmed him. He avoided all company, and remained alone in his chamber, absorbed, sad, suffering, a prey to the most doleful thoughts. His life was shattered, and he knew not how to begin to reconstruct it, so accustomed was he to depend upon her for direction, as well as companionship. His first thought was to retire to the Abbey of Sénones, of which Dom Calmet was the chief, a laborious writer upon theology and history, whose extensive collection of books Voltaire had frequently drawn upon during his long visits to the court of the King of Poland. The Abbey of Sénones was near the château of that king at Commercy, in Lorraine. Soon abandoning this idea, he thought of seeking an asylum with Lord Bolingbroke in England, and actually wrote a letter, as Longchamp asserts, to Bolingbroke, announcing his loss, and saying that he was disposed to seek consolation at his abode. The letter does not appear in his works, and seems to have had no consequences.

The inevitable duties of the crisis called him from his solitude, and after the funeral he went to Cirey with Longchamp, where he was joined soon by the Marquis du Châtelet and his brother. Here he was in some degree consoled by sympathizing letters from his guardian angels in Paris, the truest and fondest friends of his long life.

"You make my consolation, my dear angels [he wrote]; you make me love the unhappy remainder of my life. . . . I will confess to you that a house which she inhabited, though overwhelming me with grief, is not disagreeable to me. I am not afraid of my affliction; I do not fly that which speaks to me of her. I love Cirey; I could not support Lunéville, where I lost her in a manner more awful than you think; but the places which she embellished are dear to me. I have not lost a mistress; I have lost the half of myself, a soul for whom mine was made, a friend of twenty years, whom I knew in infancy. The most tender father loves not otherwise his only daughter. I love to find again everywhere the idea of her; I love to talk with her husband, with her son. . . . I have been reading once more the immense materials relating to metaphysics which she had gathered with a patience and a sagacity which used to frighten me. With all that, how was it possible for her to cry over our tragedies? She had the

genius of Leibnitz, with sensibility. Ah, my dear friend, we do not know what a loss we have suffered!"

Longchamp, meanwhile, was packing for transportation to Paris his books, marbles, bronzes, pictures, telescopes, air-pumps, and his other apparatus, much of which was placed in large barrels, and all was sent to his old abode in Paris. He had a settlement of accounts with M. du Châtelet, much to the advantage of that incomprehensible husband. He had essentially promoted the fortune of the bereaved family, and continued to be of service to it. He had, as before mentioned, lent the marquis forty thousand francs for the restoration of the old château at Cirey, receiving, by way of interest, an annuity of two thousand francs. For several years he had been in the habit of making a present to the marquis of a receipt for the amount of the annual sum. When the Brussels lawsuit had reached a favorable stage, it was Voltaire who negotiated and effected a compromise, by which the Du Châtelets surrendered their claim for the sum of two hundred thousand francs in ready money. He then proposed to the marquis to terminate their pecuniary relations at once and forever by selling him back his annuity for the sum of fifteen thousand francs. Du Châtelet gratefully accepted this proposal, and contrived to pay ten thousand francs of the sum agreed upon, leaving five thousand unpaid at the time of his wife's death. This debt Voltaire now formally relinquished, asking only in return a few mementos which he had himself given her, such as his own miniature set in diamonds, and some articles of furniture which he had bought for her at a sale.¹

It is interesting to observe how scrupulously he used the forms of respect demanded by the rank of this husband, to whom he was so strangely related. In giving an account of these transactions to that husband's elder sister, he says, "The marquis deigned to accept from an old servant this arrangement, which he would not have accepted from a man less attached to him. . . . I value his friendship above five thousand francs."

After a stay of fifteen days at Cirey, Longchamp packing, himself working a little upon his "Rome Sauvée," he returned

¹ Voltaire to the Countess de Montrevel (sister of the Marquis du Châtelet), November 15, 1749.

by easy stages to Paris, and took up his abode in his old quarters, Rue Traversière, now hired by him from the Marquis du Châtelet. The house was a roomy old mansion in the Faubourg St. Antoine, not very far from the Bastille. The marquis, who cared little for Paris or the court, but loved his gun and dogs, retained the first and second floors, and let all the rest to Voltaire. The rooms would scarcely contain the multitude of things brought from Cirey, which were heaped up pell-mell, as Longchamp records, a chaos of splendid and interesting objects, which could neither be enjoyed nor seen. The owner wandered about among them, sick, sorrowful, inconsolable, sleepless, admitting only his guardian angels, the D'Argentals, and Richelieu, and them not often. He never went out.

“During the nights [says Longchamp] he would get up, all agitation, and, fancying he saw Madame du Châtelet, he would call to her, and drag himself with difficulty from room to room, as if in search of her. It was the end of October, and the cold was already somewhat severe. In the middle of a certain night when he could not sleep, he got up out of bed, and after groping a few steps about the room he felt so weak that he leaned against a table to keep from falling. He remained standing there a long time, shivering with cold, and yet reluctant to wake me. At length he forced himself to go into the next room, where almost all his books were heaped upon the floor. But he was far from remembering this, and, his head always filled with the same object, he was endeavoring to traverse the room, when, running against a pile of folios, he stumbled and fell. Unable to rise, he called me several times; but so feeble was his voice that at first I did not hear him, although I slept near by. Waking, at last, I heard him groan and faintly repeat my name. I sprang up, and ran toward him. Having no light, and going very fast, my feet became entangled with his, and I fell upon him. Upon getting up, I found him speechless and almost frozen. I made haste to lift him to his bed, and, having struck a light and made a great fire, I endeavored to warm him by wrapping his body and limbs in very hot cloths. That produced a good effect. Gradually I saw him coming to himself; he opened his eyes, and, recognizing me, he said that he felt very tired and had need of rest. Having covered him well and closed his curtains, I remained in his room the rest of the night. He soon fell asleep, and did not wake until near eleven in the morning.”

Longchamp claims to have assisted his recovery by means

still more effectual. Among the letters which he had saved from the conflagration of madame's papers there were some in which she had spoken of Voltaire with great freedom. We know that she did this in conversation. With several of these letters within easy reach, Longchamp ventured to say to his "dear master," whom he saw perishing daily, that he was very much in the wrong to mourn so deeply the death of a lady who had not loved him. "What!" he cried. "Mordieu! She did not love me?" "No," said Longchamp; "I have the proof in my hand, and here it is." He gave him the letters, which he read, and remained silent a long time. "She deceived me!" he said at length, with a sigh; "who would have believed it?" From that hour, according to the secretary, he began to recover his cheerfulness, and never again left his bed in the night pronouncing the name of Emilie.

Something of this kind may have occurred; for, no doubt, a person so little accustomed to restrain her tongue had frequently given full play to her pen. The Abbé de Voisenon, a warm friend of the marquise for many years, has a brief passage on this point: "Madame du Châtelet concealed nothing from me; I remained often alone with her until five in the morning. . . . She said to me sometimes that she was entirely detached from Voltaire. I made no reply. I took one of the eight volumes [of manuscript letters from Voltaire to the marquise, which she had had bound in eight beautiful quartos], and I read some of the letters. I observed her eyes moisten with tears. I promptly shut the book, saying, 'You are not cured!' The last year of her life, I put her to the same test. She criticised them; I was convinced that the cure was accomplished. She confided to me that Saint-Lambert had been the doctor."¹

Voltaire's letters of this melancholy time harmonize with his secretary's narrative. The letters of October are in the tone of despair. In those of November much interest is shown in his usual pursuits, and he renews his labors to complete and perfect his new plays. He wrote often to the Duchess du Maine, "*ma protectrice*," arranging with her the details of a first performance on her private stage at Sceaux of "Rome Sauvée," in which the author himself was to play

¹ Quoted by Desnoiresterres in *Voltaire à la Cour*, page 180.

the part of Cicero. The drama, always his consolation when other sources of enjoyment failed, was his chief means of restoration now, as it doubtless will be, finally and forever, the most constant solace of toil-worn mortals. By Christmas, too, he had put his house in order. He took the whole of the large house from the Marquis du Châtelet, and so found room for his furniture and objects of art. He invited his niece, Madame Denis, to live with him and do the honors of his abode. She was abundantly willing, and about Christmas took possession of the keys and governed his house. His other relations frequently visited him, and assisted to cheer his existence in the most natural manner. Madame Denis, whatever her faults, was at least a woman of the world, a true *Parisienne*, interested in art and society, ambitious to shine. She had herself written a comedy, was somewhat proficient in music, and could take a part in a play with some credit. "I have returned to Paris," wrote Voltaire to Frederic, November 10, 1749. "I have gathered my family about me; I have taken a house, and I find myself the father of a family, without having any children. Thus, in my grief, I have formed an honorable and quiet establishment, and I shall spend the winter in completing these arrangements."

It seemed, then, that he had won at last, at the age of fifty-six, a suitable and becoming home in his native city. The Hôtel de Richelieu was close at hand. The D'Argentals were not far from him. Several of the friends of his early days were still living, — the Abbé d'Olivet, D'Argenson, Thieriot, and others. He was rich beyond the most sanguine dreams of his youth. Longchamp gives us the catalogue of his revenues for this very year, 1749, amounting to seventy-four thousand francs. He informs us, also, that this catalogue was incomplete, and that the actual income was probably eighty thousand francs, a sum equal in purchasing power to perhaps fifty thousand dollars of our present currency. It was a large income for the time, one that placed every reasonable gratification within his reach. It was an income, too, of which the fiat of no man could deprive him. He did not yet own a foot of land. He drew his revenue from the bonds of the city of Paris, from mortgages, from annuities upon the estates of great lords. He had twenty sources of supply, which could

not all fail him, let him be compelled to fly to the ends of the earth. He kept his resources in light marching order.

France had been at peace since 1748. Why should he not henceforth remain at home, cultivate his art, amuse Paris, enjoy his celebrity, and glide tranquilly into the veteran? Because he was Voltaire; because France was France; because he had scarcely yet begun the work which makes him a personage in the history of man; and because, until a man's work is substantially done, it is in vain that he seeks the repose of the chimney corner.

CHAPTER XLVII.

HOUSEHOLDER IN PARIS.

IT is evident from his letters of this time that he considered himself settled for life. His intention was, after spending the winter in Paris, to visit the King of Prussia, and then gratify a long-cherished desire of making the tour of Italy. He wished to see Rome, and the two buried cities in which the past had been preserved for the inspection of modern eyes. This desire appeased, he meant to return to his home in Paris, and resume there his life of toil and pleasure.

He did not know as well as we now do how completely he had lost his court favor. Neither Richelieu nor Pompadour could hold their own, in such a cause, against Boyer, the queen, the dauphin, the princesses, and the antipathy of the king. Nevertheless, on one condition, he could have lived in peace in his house the rest of his days: he must have discontinued the important part of his career; he must have let the Boyers remain in unmolested possession of the intellect of France. But this was impossible to him. He might as well have tried to live without breathing.

Longchamp has already told us the story of the publication of "Zadig," one of a series of satirical tales, which he composed from 1746 to 1750. How could an author expect court favor while publishing burlesques so effective as these of every court abuse, and even of court personages, transparently disguised? There was one little tale of his, called "The World as it Goes, or the Vision of Babouc," which had been circulating two or three years under an equally transparent veil of the anonymous. Babouc was commissioned by the presiding genius of Asia to visit the city of Persepolis, to see if it was deserving of destruction or only of chastisement. Babouc was Voltaire, and Persepolis was Paris. Every fault of the *régime* was touched lightly, but in a way that made it ridic-

ulous forever. The needlessness of the war then wasting France, promotion by intrigue of mistresses, the "good old times" superstition, the burial of the dead under churches, the sale of offices, the persecution of philosophers, all the topics, important and unimportant, were treated with his own grace, brevity, and point.

Babouc enters a sombre and vast inclosure filled with the old and ill-favored, where some people paid money to others for the privilege of seating themselves. He thought it must be a market for the sale of rush-bottomed chairs. "But immediately, seeing several women going down upon their knees, pretending to look straight before them, and eying men furtively, Babouc perceived that he was in a temple." A young man who had bought a judgeship consults an old lawyer as to the decision he ought to give in a cause. "But," asks Babouc, "why is not the old man on the bench?" Babouc visits the great college of mages, or priests, the chief of whom confessed that he had a revenue of a hundred thousand crowns a year for having taken the vow of poverty. Babouc admires "the magnificence of that house of penitence."

Another of these tales was called "Memnon, or Human Wisdom," a burlesque of those luxurious theologians of the century whose fundamental maxim was that partial evil is the general good. It was Pope's all-is-as-well-as-possible theory of the universe. It was the theory of comfortable, solid men, who have little sympathy and less imagination. A burlesque of a system of philosophy would have been harmless enough from any other pen. But Voltaire must needs bring his battered enthusiast to court, "with a plaster on his eye and a petition in his hand," to get redress for outrageous wrongs. There he meets several ladies wearing hoops twenty-four feet in circumference, one of whom, eying him askance, said, "Oh, horror!" Another, who knew him a little, said to him, "Good evening, Monsieur Memnon; indeed, Monsieur Memnon, I am very glad to see you. Apropos, Monsieur Memnon, how came you to lose an eye?" And she passed on without waiting for an answer. Finally, he throws himself at the king's feet, and presents his petition. The king receives it very graciously, and hands it to a satrap for examination and report. The satrap draws Memnon aside, and says to him,

with a haughty air and a bitter sneer, "I find you a pleasant style of one-eyed man to address yourself to the king rather than to me, and still more pleasant to dare ask justice against an honest bankrupt, whom I honor with my protection, and who is the nephew of a *femme de chambre* of my mistress. Abandon this affair, my friend, if you wish to keep your other eye!"

After many adventures of this kind, poor Memnon, who began life with sanguine hopes of attaining perfect happiness by the exercise of perfect virtue, comes to the conclusion that this little terraqueous globe of ours is the mad-house of the universe. All of which was very amusing except to parties burlesqued, who owned France and kept the key of the Bastille.

Another of these airy tales was called "History of the Travels of Scarmentado, by Himself," a burlesque of religious intolerance, that compels the reader to laugh and shudder at the same moment. Scarmentado visited Rome under Leo X. to find it a scene of debauchery and rapine; France, desolate by sixty years of religious wars; England, where he was shown the place on which the blessed Queen Mary, daughter of Henry VIII., had burned five hundred of her subjects; Holland, where he saw the bald head of the prime minister, Barneveldt, cut off, because he believed men were saved by good works as well as by faith. At Seville, on a lovely spring day, when all breathed abundance and joy, Scarmentado witnessed a glorious festival. The king, the queen, and their children, little girls as well as boys, were seated on a magnificent platform in a public square. "Some very beautiful prayers were chanted; the forty guilty ones were burned by a slow fire; at which all the royal family appeared to be extremely edified." Scarmentado found a Spanish bishop boasting that they had drowned, burned, or put to the sword ten millions of infidels in America, in order to convert the Americans. He gravely remarks thereupon, "I believe that this bishop exaggerated; but if we should reduce those sacrifices to five millions, it would still be admirable."

The traveler continues his journey round the world, and everywhere finds men waging cruel war against men for opinions and usages, monstrous or trivial. On reaching Ispahan, for example, he was assailed by a terrible question: "Are you

for the black sheep or the white sheep?" He replied, "It is indifferent to me, provided the mutton is tender." Both sects set upon him as a vile scoffer, and he had to fly for his life.

Then came "Zadig," the story he had read piecemeal to the Duchess du Maine in the small hours of the morning. This was the longest of the series, but it could be read in an evening, and it was full of offense. To Madame du Maine, every scene was a satire of the life she daily witnessed; nearly every name was the pseudonym of a person she was familiar with. The story begins thus: "In the time of King Moabdar, there was at Babylon a young man named Zadig." She took it otherwise: "In the time of Louis XV., there was in Paris a young man named Voltaire." That is to say, it was the mind of Voltaire before which now passed in rapid review the state of things existing in her world. In this work he attacked Boyer under so obvious an anagram that no one failed to recognize the ancient Bishop of Mirepoix. He called him "*Yebor*, the most stupid of the Chaldeans, and therefore the most fanatical." A controversy raged in Babylon as to whether there was such an animal as a griffin. "Why," said one party, "should Zoroaster forbid the eating of griffins, if there are no griffins?" Zadig sought to reconcile the embittered sects by saying, "If there are griffins, let us not eat them; if there are none, we shall still less eat them; and, in either case, we shall obey Zoroaster." This was flat heresy. A learned person, who had written thirteen volumes on the properties of the griffin, hastened to accuse Zadig before the fanatical Yebor, who would gladly have impaled him for the greater glory of the sun, and recited the breviary of Zoroaster on the occasion, with the most satisfied tone. A friend took up the young heretic's defense. "Beware of punishing Zadig!" he cried; "he is a saint. He has some griffins in his poultry-yard, and yet does not eat them. His accuser is a heretic, who dares maintain that rabbits have cloven feet, and are not unclean." "Very well," said Yebor, shaking his bald head, "it is necessary to impale Zadig for having thought ill of griffins, and the other for having spoken amiss of rabbits." The friend arranged the matter through his mistress, "a maid of honor," and no one was impaled.

The trivial nature of the theological controversies of the

day was variously burlesqued in this story. "For fifteen hundred years Babylon had been divided into two irreconcilable sects: one maintaining that to enter the Temple of Mithra except with the right foot first was an abomination, and the other denouncing all who presumed to enter except with the left. The bold Zadig jumped into the temple with both feet, and proved in an eloquent discourse that God was no respecter of persons, and cared no more for one foot than the other. The tale alluded also to the malign whisperers of the ante-chamber, who every day uttered some new charge against a loyal servant of the king. "The first accusation is repelled; the second grazes; the third wounds; the fourth kills."

Besides these fictions, there was a piece of similar tone which assailed superstition in a more direct manner, called "The Voice of the Sage and of the People." It was a series of short paragraphs, tending to show that it is religious enthusiasms that waste the wealth of nations and menace the tranquillity of kings. "Here is a convent with two hundred thousand francs of annual revenue. Reason says, Divide that estate among a hundred officers, who would marry and rear citizens for their country." It was superstition that assassinated Henry III., Henry IV., and the Prince of Orange, besides causing to flow rivers of common blood. But no philosopher had ever raised a parricidal hand against his king, or advised disobedience to the laws. Reason perfected would destroy the very germ of religious wars, which the philosophic spirit had already banished from the world.

It was not, however, such passages as these that made the "Voice of the Sage" so offensive to the Bishop of Mirepoix and his colleagues. The question of taxing the vast property of the church was assuming importance, and this pamphlet presented the question in such a way that it seemed to admit of only one answer. He went to the root of the matter:—

"There ought not to be two authorities in a state.

"The distinction between spiritual authority and temporal authority is a relic of Vandal barbarism, as if, in a house, two masters should be recognized: I, who am the father of the family; and, besides me, the tutor of my children, to whom I pay wages.

"I desire that very great respect be paid my children's in-

structor, but I am very far from wishing him to have the least authority in my house.

“In France, where reason becomes more developed every day, reason teaches us that the church ought to contribute to the expenses of the nation in proportion to its revenues, and that the body set apart to teach justice ought to begin by giving an example of it.

“That government would be worthy of the Hottentots in which it should be permitted to a certain number of men to say, ‘Let those pay taxes who work; we ought not to pay anything, because we are idle.’

“That government would outrage God and men in which citizens should be able to say, ‘The nation has given us all we have, and we owe nothing to it except prayers.’”

This “Voice of the People,” a short essay, which the reader might not observe in the multitudinous writings of the author, was the sensation of the year in ecclesiastical circles. It was a Voice that awoke many echoes. Replies, refutations, and parodies appeared in such numbers that as many as fifteen are known and catalogued at this day. There was the “Voice of the Priest,” the “Voice of the Bishop,” the “Voice of the Pope,” the “Voice of the Fool,” the “Voice of the Women,” the “Voice of the Poor Man,” the “Voice of the Rich Man,” the “Voice of the Poet,” the “Voice Crying in the Wilderness,” the “Voice of the Christian,” and, finally, a volume containing all these Voices. A little pamphlet has seldom raised such a storm.

These brief notices of his lighter labors during the last years of Madame du Châtelet’s life will suffice to explain the loss of any little favor he may have won at court by two years of toil for its amusement. These tales and essays were easy to read, short, full of that satirical gayety which Frenchmen are quickest to appreciate, and not wanting in weighty truth most needful for citizens to know. The king himself probably had mental force enough to read works so adroitly adapted to the inert intellect. The queen, too, and her dull little court may have been equal to some of them; and there are always people close at hand to minister to the passions of those who control the expenditure of a nation’s revenue. A notable scheme was conceived in 1748, as Marmontel records, to assail Voltaire in the

very citadel of his power. His dramatic celebrity, as we have before seen, he habitually used as a means of self-protection. When a storm lowered, when he felt a *lettre de cachet* in the air, he seems always to have gone to his portfolios and rummaged for a new tragedy; for even the most servile minister hesitated to launch a bolt at a man who had just given Paris a new pleasure and the king's reign a new glory. But now the hostile faction disinterred a rival to Voltaire in the drama itself.

Crébillon, the dramatist of a former generation, was still living, seventy-four years of age, in obscurity, most of his great successes of other days forgotten. He had written effective tragedies, chiefly remarkable for their power to excite terror. Being questioned, after the successful production of one of his terrific plays, "L'Atrée," as to his reason for choosing that line, he answered, "Corneille has appropriated heaven, and Racine the earth. Nothing remained for me but hell, and I threw myself into it headlong." Marmontel, who was now an established man of letters, a favorite of the reigning mistress, was an eye-witness of the attempt made to resuscitate the aged poet, and restore to him the first place in the drama of France.

"Crébillon [he tells us], old and poor, was living in the vilest part of the Marais, laboring by starts at that 'Catilina' which he had announced for ten years, and of which he read here and there some bits of scenes that were thought admirable. His age, his former success, his somewhat rough manners, his soldier-like character, his truly tragical face, the air, the imposing though simple tone in which he recited his harsh and inharmonious verses, the vigor, the energy, he gave to his expression, all concurred to strike the mind with a sort of enthusiasm.

"The name of Crébillon was the rallying cry for the enemies of Voltaire. 'Electre' and 'Rhadamiste,' which were sometimes still played, drew but thin houses. All the rest of Crébillon's tragedies were forgotten; while those of Voltaire, 'Œdipe,' 'Alzire,' 'Mahomet,' 'Zaire,' and 'Mérope,' were often performed in all the splendor of full success. The partisans of old Crébillon were few, but noisy. They did not cease to call him the Sophocles of our age; and, even among men of letters, Marivaux used to say that all the fine wit of Voltaire must bow before the genius of Crébillon.

"It was mentioned before Madame de Pompadour that this great,

neglected man was suffered to grow old without support, because he was without art and intrigue. This was touching her in a tender part. 'What say you?' cried she. 'Crébillon poor and forsaken!' She instantly obtained for him a pension of two thousand francs from the privy purse.

"Crébillon was eager to thank his benefactress. A slight indisposition kept her in bed when he was announced. She desired he might come in. The sight of this fine old man touched her; she received him with an affecting grace. He was moved by it; and, as he leaned over her bed to kiss her hand, the king appeared. 'Ah, madame,' cried Crébillon, 'the king has surprised us! I am lost.' This sally from an old man of (nearly) eighty pleased the king. The fortune of Crébillon was decided. All the little courtiers launched into praises of his genius and manners. 'He had dignity,' said they, 'but no pride, and still less vainglory. His poverty was the proof of his disinterestedness. He was a venerable character, and the man whose genius truly honored the reign of the king.' 'Catilina' was mentioned as the wonder of the age. Madame de Pompadour wished to hear it. A day was fixed for the reading; the king, present, but invisible, heard it also. It had complete success; and, on its first performance, Madame de Pompadour, accompanied by a crowd of courtiers, attended with the most lively interest. A little time afterward Crébillon obtained the favor of an edition of his works at the press of the Louvre, the expense defrayed by the royal treasury. From that time Voltaire was coldly received, and he left off going to court."

The reader does not need to be informed that Voltaire was not the person to submit to an intrigue of this nature. His way of meeting it was one possible only to himself. He selected for the theme of his next tragedy the story of Sémiramis, Queen of Babylon, a subject which had once been treated by Crébillon. The success of this powerful play was not as decided as Longchamp imagined. All depended upon the ghost scene, which the author again attempted, still remembering the effect of the ghost in Hamlet on the London stage. But the crowd of dandies on the stage left, as Voltaire remarked, "scarcely more than a space of ten feet wide for the actors," and thus the awful power of the ghost scene in the third act, so necessary to the effect of the later scenes, was fatally marred. On the succeeding nights, more room was retained for the actors; and unprejudiced spectators agreed in assigning this tragedy a rank among the masterpieces of the French

drama. It has retained its place on the stage to this day. But, for the moment, it failed of the effect the author, at the moment, desired. The forced success of Crébillon's "Catalina" followed. Voltaire, as we have seen, was roused by it to write a tragedy upon the same subject, and, almost before the ink was dry, threw himself upon another of Crébillon's subjects, — "Electre," — and produced a tragedy which he entitled "Oreste." These two pieces — "Rome Sauvée" and "Oreste" — were in the author's portfolio, though still under revision, when he returned to Paris after the death of Madame du Châtelet in October, 1749.

The very actors had caught the infection of his ill-favor at court. They had been restive under his exactions for the due presentation of "Sémiramis," the short run of which had not tended to make them more submissive. He would have four men in the wings to extinguish the candles, and another man to lower the foot-lights, in order to "execute the night," on the appearance of the ghost. He was himself a good actor, and he had, as all good actors have, the stage-manager's instinct sensitively alive. He insisted on having his dramatic conceptions conveyed to his audiences as vividly as the art permitted. One result of the imperfect success of "Sémiramis" and the ostentatious "protection" bestowed upon Crébillon" was an ill-feeling between himself and the company of actors attached to the Théâtre-Français. "Sarrasin," he wrote to D'Argental, "spoke to me with much more than indecency when I begged him, on behalf of the public, to put into his playing more soul and more dignity. There are four or five of the actors who refuse me the salute, because I made them appear upon the stage as silent spectators. La Noue has declaimed against the piece much more loftily than he declaimed his part. In a word, I have experienced from them nothing but ingratitude and insolence."

Established now in a spacious house of his own, his melancholy in some degree dispelled, his friends and family about him, he resolved to dispense with these ungrateful actors, without depriving himself of the pleasure their art had afforded him. He had a great room in his second story arranged as a little theatre, capable of seating a hundred persons and of containing a hundred and twenty. Longchamp had brought him

a good account of a company of young amateurs, who were in the habit of playing for their own amusement twice a week in a hall hired by themselves, and Voltaire sent them a polite invitation to visit him. One of these amateurs was a goldsmith's son, named Lekain, then just of age, who was destined to a long and splendid career upon the Paris stage. It was the ever assiduous Longchamp who bore Voltaire's invitation to the company.

“ My message [he says] was received by all of them with as much joy as surprise. They promised to call upon M. de Voltaire, and it was agreed that they should come at ten o'clock in the morning. On the day fixed, the entire troupe, including even the candle-snuffer, arrived punctually at the rendezvous. No one on that day had neglected his toilet, and all those young people were extremely well dressed. I conducted them to the drawing-room. A moment after, M. de Voltaire appeared. He began by thanking them for their good-will and for complying with his desire so promptly. Addressing each in turn, he ascertained their line of parts and the pieces in which they played with most success. He questioned Lekain much, whom I had described as the best performer of the company. Then he invited the five or six principal actors to declaim some passage taken indifferently from one of their parts. In general, he appeared tolerably satisfied; he encouraged them, and promised them some instruction from which their talent could profit if they were willing to receive it with docility. At length, in order to judge them better, he engaged them to come the next day, towards six o'clock in the evening, to play upon his stage the tragedy they knew best. They acquiesced at once in this request, and several voices said that the tragedy which they played most willingly and successfully was ‘Mahomet, the Prophet.’ A desire to pay court to the author of that piece may have had some influence in determining their choice.

“ However that may be, the thing was so arranged, and the next day they played the tragedy of ‘Mahomet’ in the hall he had prepared, the only spectators being M. de Voltaire, Madame Denis, M. and Madame d'Argental, the Duke de Richelieu, and M. de Pont-de-Veyle, a brother of M. d'Argental. I also was present at this representation, according to the injunction of M. de Voltaire. Two or three persons attached to the house may also have been there. Lekain played with force and intelligence, and, above all, with much earnestness, the part of Mahomet, which he has since performed in a manner so superior upon the public stage. The other parts were played sufficiently well. M. de Voltaire saw with pleasure the union

of those young people, their zeal, their correctness, and the unity which they knew how to give to the execution of his piece, though they were occasionally interrupted. This performance was, to speak precisely, only a general rehearsal. The author stopped the actors from time to time, and made them begin a scene again, showing to each the gesture and tone suitable to his part and to the situation.

“Upon the whole, he was well enough content with this first performance. He invited both actors and spectators to remain to supper, and, at the end of the repast, he brought the parts of his ‘Rome Sauvée,’ and distributed them to those young people, requesting them to learn their parts as soon as they could. . . . He engaged Lekain, in whom he discovered the germ of a superior talent, to come and live with him, a proposal which was accepted with ardor by that young man.

“When the rôles of ‘Rome Sauvée’ were well learned, it was rehearsed several times, M. de Voltaire giving himself much trouble to direct and form the actors. At length, all being arranged to his mind, he wished to have the piece played before a company of connoisseurs, to get their judgment upon it. To complete the illusion, he desired that all the accessories should be in accord with the subject of the play. For that purpose, a considerable number of new costumes in the Roman style were necessary, which could not be made without much time and expense. He conceived the plan of borrowing for the purpose the superb dresses and magnificent properties provided by the court for the ‘Catilina’ of Crébillon, played some time before with great pomp, both at court and in the city. All those effects were preserved with care at the Théâtre-Français, where they were again to be used before long for the same play, though it had already had thirty or forty representations. This run was in consequence of the high protection accorded then to Crébillon,—a protection prepared and obtained by the intrigues of a cabal envenomed against M. de Voltaire, whom they thought to abase and annihilate by exalting Crébillon. . . . M. de Voltaire asked M. de Richelieu to grant him for a single day the costumes which had been made for ‘Catilina.’ The First Gentleman of the Chamber consenting without difficulty, all was sent to the Rue Traversière, and nothing now delayed the representation of ‘Rome Sauvée.’

“On the day appointed, the hall was filled at an early hour. Only a very few ladies were present, the audience consisting principally of men of letters; among others, MM. D’Alembert, Diderot, Marmontel, the President Hénault, the Abbés de Voisenou and Raynal, and several Academicians, such as the Abbé d’Olivet and others. The Dukes de Richelieu and de la Vallière attended, and some other intimate

friends of the author, whom I had invited on his part. Among them were particularly remarked Father de la Tour, principal of the College of the Jesuits [Louis-le-Grand], and his companion. These fathers never attended any plays except those which were given by their scholars in college; but M. de Voltaire, who had read his tragedy to Father de la Tour, and had received from him strong compliments thereupon, so pressed him to come and see it played that he consented. The actors, kindled by the presence of so many enlightened judges, put into the performance of their parts all the fire of which they were capable. The audience, in general, seemed very well satisfied with them, but were still more so with the piece. They admired the beauty of the poetry, the force and truth of the characters; and connoisseurs agreed that, in these respects, 'Rome Sauvée' was equal to the best of M. de Voltaire's plays.

"The Abbé d'Olivet was especially enchanted, and he openly testified his joy and his gratitude to the author for having at last avenged his dear Cicero for the flat and ridiculous part which old Crébillon had made him play in his 'Catilina.' After the performance, M. de Voltaire could not doubt the general satisfaction. Every one was eager to testify it to him, and urged him not to deprive the public of so beautiful a work.

"The fame of the little theatre of the Rue Traversière rapidly spread over all Paris. Though established first by M. de Voltaire only for the purpose of trying his new pieces, it became in a short time almost a public theatre. His friends, whom he had at first admitted, solicited the same favor for others. Persons of consideration, foreigners of note, who knew him only by reputation, sought admission, and he had not the force to refuse. I have seen more than one minister and more than one ambassador present. It was necessary, at last, to have tickets, the bearers of which alone should be admitted. By means of some steps along the sides of the room, which M. de Voltaire called his boxes, about a hundred persons could find seats, while at least twenty others, standing in a kind of vestibule, could also enjoy the play.

"The fame of the tragedy of 'Rome Sauvée' gave many people a desire to see it. A second representation was given, which was more remarkable than the first, and produced a more lively sensation. Without notifying any of the spectators except three or four, M. de Voltaire himself played the part of Cicero, as he had done once before at the château of Madame la Duchesse du Maine at Sceaux some weeks previously. He excited the same enthusiasm at Paris. Some persons whom I saw thirty years after that representation, and who had been witnesses of it with me, spoke to me of it with as much in-

terest as if it had taken place the evening before. Some time after, M. de Voltaire tried his tragedy of the 'Duc de Foix.' I saw played, also, by the little troupe of amateurs, 'Zulime,' — a piece formerly represented, but little more known than the play last named. Two nieces of the author appeared in it together: Madame Denis in the part of Zulime, and Madame de Fontaine in that of Aive. They played tolerably well, and must have been flattered by the reception which the audience gave them.

"The company of the Théâtre-Français could not be unaware of the celebrity of the theatre in the Rue Traversière. Some of them, against whom M. de Voltaire had no complaint, ventured to come to him and ask the favor of being admitted to his theatre. They were not ill received; for, before they left, M. de Voltaire called me, and told me to give them two tickets for each of the next four representations. The actors thus obliged gave an account to their comrades of the new pieces which they saw performed. The company felt that those pieces would have been very useful to their theatre, which languished for want of interesting novelties. They began to realize their past imprudence, and to feel how wrong they had been in giving M. de Voltaire cause to be dissatisfied. They no longer concealed their desire to atone for their fault. This being the posture of affairs, M. d'Argental and M. de Pont-de-Veyle, his brother, coming to a knowledge of the actors' disposition, undertook to reconcile M. de Voltaire to them, and thus promote the enjoyment of the public, who eagerly desired to see those pieces played, of which they had heard so much. These were the two brothers whom he called sometimes his guardian angels, and sometimes Castor and Pollux, alluding to the tutelary divinities who restored hope and courage to sailors beaten by a tempest. Their friendship, beginning in childhood, was always extremely precious and useful to M. de Voltaire in all the circumstances of his life, and deserved the names which he took pleasure in giving them.

"On the present occasion, those gentlemen spoke to the most influential actors, and made them feel the propriety of sending him a deputation to ask him to open for them his portfolio. The deputation arrived, having at its head as orator M. Grandval. His address, the object of which was to calm M. de Voltaire, asked the oblivion of all past wrongs, and promised that the recollection of those wrongs should be entirely effaced from his mind by their future conformity to all his desires. Grandval ended his speech by entreating the poet, the author of so many masterpieces, to take the company again into favor, and restore to them his works. M. de Voltaire never knew how to keep rancor when any one returned to him in good faith;

and, in fact, I have in other circumstances seen him pardon and forget graver injuries when confession was made and repentance shown. He was not insensible to this proceeding of the actors, gave a good reception to the deputation, and promised compliance with its request. The difference between them was so terminated."

We possess, also, Lekain's recollection of his interviews and residence with Voltaire during this important year, which fixed his destiny. He, too, mentions his surprise and delight upon being invited to visit the author, who was the first of living men in his regard.

"The pleasure [he tells us] which this invitation gave me was still greater than my surprise. But what I cannot describe is my feeling at the sight of that man, whose eyes sparkled with the fire of imagination and of genius. On addressing him I felt myself penetrated with respect, enthusiasm, admiration, and fear. All these sensations at once I experienced, when M. de Voltaire had the goodness to put an end to my embarrassment by folding me in his arms, and thanking God for having created a being who had kindled and moved him by the delivery of verses that were not too good.

"He questioned me upon my condition, upon that of my father, upon the manner in which I had been brought up, upon my ideas of fortune. After having satisfied him upon all these points, and after having taken my share of a dozen cups of chocolate, mixed with coffee, his only nourishment from five in the morning until three in the afternoon, I replied to him with intrepid firmness that I knew no other happiness in life than to play upon the stage; that, a cruel and melancholy chance having left me my own master, and possessing a little patrimony of about seven hundred and fifty francs per annum, I had reason to hope that in abandoning the trade and skill of my father I should not sustain any loss, if I could one day be admitted into the king's troupe of actors.

"'Ah, my friend,' cried M. de Voltaire, 'never do that! Take my advice: act for your pleasure, but never make acting your business. It is the most beautiful, the most rare, the most difficult, of talents; but it is abased by barbarians and proscribed by hypocrites. One day France will value your art aright; but then there will be no more Barons, no more Lecouvreaux, no more D'Angevilles. If you are willing to renounce your project, I will lend you ten thousand francs to go into business for yourself, and you shall pay me back when you can. Go, my friend; come and see me toward the end of the week; consider the subject well, and give me a positive answer.'

"Stunned, confused, and penetrated even to tears by the obliging

and generous offers of that great man, who was called avaricious, hard, and pitiless, I wished to pour out my thanks. Finally I adopted the plan of making my bow while stammering a few words, and I was going to take my leave, when he called me back to ask me to repeat some fragments of the parts I had already played. Without consideration, I proposed to him, with little enough tact, the grand passage from the second act of Piron's 'Gustave.' 'No Piron, no Piron,' said he, with a voice thundering and terrible; 'I do not like bad verses. Speak all you know of Racine.'

"Fortunately, I remembered that, while at the College Mazarin, I had learned the whole tragedy of 'Athalie' from having heard it often rehearsed by the scholars who were going to play it. I began at the first scene, playing alternately Abner and Joab. But I had not yet entirely completed my task, when M. de Voltaire cried out with a divine enthusiasm, —

"'Oh! mon Dieu! the lovely verses! And the wonder is that all the piece is written with the same warmth, the same purity, from the first scene to the last. Everywhere in it the poetry is inimitable. Good-by, my dear child,' embracing me. 'I predict that you will one day rend the heart, but be the delight, of Paris. But never go upon the public stage.'

"Such is an exact account of my first interview with M. de Voltaire. The second was more decisive, since he consented, after the most urgent entreaties on my part, to receive me into his house, and let me play with his nieces and all my company in his little theatre. . . .

"The expense which this temporary establishment caused him and the disinterested offer which he made me some days before proved to me in a very touching manner that he was as generous and noble in his proceedings as his enemies were unjust in ascribing to him the vice of sordid economy. These are facts of which I have been a witness. I owe still another avowal to the truth; not only did M. de Voltaire aid me by his counsels for more than six months, but he paid my expenses during that time; and since I have belonged to the stage I can prove that he has given me more than two thousand crowns. He calls me to-day *his great actor, his Garrick, his dear child*. These titles I owe only to his goodness; but the title which I adopt at the bottom of my heart is that of a pupil, respectful and penetrated with gratitude."

Lekain adds an anecdote of the dramatist's mode of drilling the troupe: —

"A very young and pretty girl, daughter of a solicitor to the par-

liament, played with me the part of Palmire in 'Mahomet,' in the theatre of M. de Voltaire. This amiable child, only fifteen, was far from being able to deliver with force and energy the imprecations against her tyrant. She was merely young, pretty, and interesting. He therefore treated her with a great deal of tenderness, and, to show her how far she was from being up to her part, he said to her, —

“ ‘Mademoiselle, imagine that Mahomet is an impostor, a cheat, a scoundrel, who has had your father stabbed, has just poisoned your brother, and who, to crown his good works, absolutely wishes to possess you. If all these trifles give you a certain pleasure, ah! then you are right in treating him so gently as you do; but if his behavior gives you rather some repugnance, why, then, mademoiselle, this is how you ought to address him.’ ”

“ Then, repeating the imprecation, he gave to that poor innocent child, red with shame and trembling with fear, a lesson so much the more precious since he joined example to precept. She became in time a very agreeable actress.”

Thus it was that he found consolation in the art of which he was a votary for sixty years, — an art which was the ambition of his youth, the occupation of his happiest hours, the solace of his old age, his first triumph and his last. His peace was now made with the actors of the national theatre, and he could resume at any moment his career as national dramatist. He put the docility of the company at once to a severe test. Having invited them, with the D'Argentals and a few other devotees of the drama, to the reading of a new tragedy, he read to them, not “Rome Sauvée,” which they expected and desired, but his new “Electre,” which he now called “Oreste,” a piece after Sophocles, in the severe and simple taste of the Greek master. Crébillon had once treated the subject with some success, though his “Electre” had ceased to be performed. Voltaire adhered closely to the Greek system, discarding love, and presenting the awful story in the austere, uncompromising manner of the Greeks. The actors looked blank when he began the session by reading the list of characters.

“ You expected,” said the author, “that I was to give you a reading of ‘Catilina.’ Not at all, gentlemen. This year I give you ‘Oreste,’ and I shall not have ‘Catilina’ played until next year. Now for the distribution of the rôles. I ask the most profound secrecy.”

The explanation of this change was very simple, if he had

chosen to give it. The exigencies of the theatre obliged the actors to produce something new within a few days, and the author would not entrust the presentation of his beloved Cicero, and the complicated drama of which he had made Cicero the central figure, until it could be thoroughly rehearsed. The company submitted with a good grace; the parts were distributed, and the rehearsals were begun. At this distance of time, in a country where the arts exist, as it were, by sufferance, and the drama is burdened with odium and disadvantage, we can with difficulty conceive the interest taken by the public in this struggle between Voltaire and the court on the stage of the Théâtre-Français. The polite world of Paris was agitated. When the "Catilina" of Crébillon was performed in 1748, not only did the king pay the whole cost of the costumes and appointments, but the court seconded the attempt to cast Voltaire into the shade. Barbier tells us that for the three opening nights all the boxes were taken a month in advance. The princes and princesses of the royal blood made a point of attending. Servile critics vied with one another in extolling the piece, and by these arts a play insufferably tedious achieved twenty representations.

And now again Paris was astir at the announcement of Voltaire's "Oreste." Piron, if we may believe tradition, took the lead of the cabal against the new piece, and Voltaire, I need not say, omitted no expedient to give it a fair chance of success. The dread night arrived, January 12, 1750. Both parties mustered in prodigious numbers. So zealous were the opponents of the piece that, according to Duverney, some of them hissed in the street, and they kept up a vigorous hissing in the theatre, long before the play began. The author had taken the precaution to write a short address to the public, to disarm those who pretended that this was an ungracious struggle on his part against a veteran. One of the actors came forward and spoke as follows: —

"GENTLEMEN, — The author of the tragedy which we are about to have the honor of presenting to you has not the rash vanity to wish to contend against the play of 'Electre,' justly honored by your applause, still less against a fellow artist, whom he has often called Master, and who has inspired in him only a noble emulation, equally remote from discouragement and from envy, — an emulation compatible

with friendship, and such as men of letters ought to cherish. He has only wished, gentlemen, to hazard before you a picture of antiquity. When you shall have judged this feeble sketch of a masterpiece of past ages, you will return to the delineations more brilliant and varied of celebrated moderns. The Athenians, who invented this great art, which the French alone upon the earth cultivate with success, encouraged three of their citizens to labor upon the same subject. You, gentlemen, in whom to-day we see live again that people, as famous for their genius as their courage, — you, who possess their taste, will have their justice also. The author who presents to you an imitation of the antique is much more sure to find in you Athenians than he flatters himself to have rendered Sophocles. You know that Greece, in all its masterpieces, in all the kinds of poetry and eloquence, desired that beauties should be simple. You will find that simplicity in this piece, and you will discern the beauties of the original despite the faults of the copy; you will deign, above all, to accommodate yourselves to some usages of the ancient Greeks, for in the arts they are your veritable ancestors. France, which follows in their footsteps, will not censure their customs; you are to consider that already your taste, especially in dramatic works, serves as a model to other nations. It will suffice one day to be approved elsewhere that it should be said, Such was the taste of the French; it was so that illustrious nation spoke! We ask your indulgence for the manners of antiquity for the same reason that Europe, in the ages to come, will render justice to yours.”

This ingenious oration sufficed not to conciliate the enemy. The performance began. During the first four acts, as Duvorney records, it was a contest of applause and hisses, which was amusing, at length, even to the author. There were moments when the stern and awful trails caught from Sophocles silenced opponents and carried the audience away. There was one such moment at the beginning of the fifth act, when the applause seemed unanimous and enthusiastic. But even then the author perceived that it was only his friends who approved. He rose, and, leaning over his box, cried out, “Courage! Brave Athenians, applaud! That is pure Sophocles!” The conclusion of the play, however, gave the enemy another opportunity, and the author discerned that he had carried the Greek severity a little too far. Considering all the circumstances, and, especially, the weight and power of the opposing influences, the evening was regarded as a triumph for the

author. He at once revised the fifth act, and strove, with all his might and tact, to prolong and heighten his success.

We can scarcely wonder that the actors should have been sometimes rebellious under his demands. His letters to Mademoiselle Clairon, during the run of this piece, leave us in doubt whether an actress ought to be envied or pitied for having such an exacting master. After giving her an entirely new fifth act and a considerable list of changes in the other acts, all to be learned and rehearsed in two or three days, he still sends her other trifling changes, as well as minute instructions as to the delivery of striking passages. But, then, how humbly and gracefully he apologizes! "He asks her pardon, upon his knees, for the insolences with which he has loaded her part. He is himself so docile as to flatter himself that talents superior to his own will not disdain, in their turn, the observations which his admiration for Mademoiselle Clairon has extorted from him." Again, a day or two after, upon sending her another change: "It is only by a continual and severe examination of myself, it is only by an extreme docility to wise counsels, that I am able each day to render the piece less unworthy of the charms which you lend to it. If you had a quarter of the docility in which I glory, you would add some unique perfections to those with which you now adorn your part." Then, after a series of hints, he adds, "By observing these little artifices of art, by speaking sometimes without declaiming, by thus shading the beautiful colors which you throw over the personality of Electre, you would actually reach that perfection which you now nearly approach, and which ought to be the object of a noble and feeling soul. Mine feels itself made to admire and advise you; but if you wish to be perfect, think that no one has ever been perfect without listening to advice, and that one ought to be teachable in proportion to the greatness of his talents."

At the second representation of the piece, if we may believe the enemies of the author, the theatre was half filled with his hired partisans, who earned their wages so faithfully that opposition was almost silenced. Every night, as one of the hostile critics has recorded, Voltaire was in the breach, animating his friends, distributing seats, placing his paid applauders, clapping passages himself, and crying to those around

him, "Clap, my dear friends! Applaud, my dear Athenians!" Nevertheless, with all his efforts, the piece at this time had but ten representations. This was a respectable success for the period, and the play called forth the usual fire of parodies, burlesques, and epigrams.

What an incredible activity of mind was his! To these months belongs a pamphlet by him upon the "Embellishment of Paris," in which he recommended that liberality of expenditure in the beautifying of the city which has since made it the most agreeable place of residence in Europe. He dwelt upon the wise economy of such an expenditure. He foretold, what we have seen come to pass, that the influx of strangers in quest of pleasure would cause an ample return from the money invested in noble structures and beautiful public grounds. Paris was then dark and heavy with ecclesiastical edifices; its streets were narrow, unclean, and ill-paved. He desired Louis XV. to do for Paris what Louis XIV. had done for Versailles, and not wait for a great fire to clear the way. "When London was consumed, Europe said, 'London will not be rebuilt in twenty years, and even then it will show the traces of its disaster.' It was rebuilt in two years, and rebuilt with magnificence. What! will it be only at the last extremity that we shall do something as grand? Such an enterprise would encourage all the arts, attract foreigners from the extremities of Europe, enrich the kingdom, far from impoverishing it, and inure to labor a thousand wretched idlers."

CHAPTER XLVIII.

SETTLING IN PRUSSIA.

THE King of Prussia had been courting Voltaire for fourteen years, and the long courtship, as is usual, had destroyed some illusions. If Frederic still loved the poet, he had permitted himself to apply to the man the word *fou*, as a lover, in a moment of irritation, calls his sweetheart a little fool. But he desired to possess him not the less. He longed for him. He said to him once that he would have given him a province rather than not had him. Death, in 1749, had removed the king's only rival, and taken away Voltaire's constant excuse for not going to him. He renewed and intensified his solicitations, but saw the bereaved poet arrange himself for an independent existence in Paris.

Why did this German king want this French author? It is Voltaire himself, I think, who suggests the controlling reason. Lord Lyttleton, in his "Dialogues of the Dead," assigns to Pope these words: "When the King of Prussia drew Voltaire from Paris to Berlin, he had a whole Academy of *belles-lettres* in him alone." That was true, but probably not the true reason. Voltaire was the most agreeable of living men to men of intellectual tastes; and a king who is not enough man to enjoy the society of women must solace himself as best he can with amusing men. But this frugal and able monarch would not have given a province even for the best story-teller in Europe. Frederic, then enjoying peace, leisure, and "glory," had again become an industrious author, as the thirty volumes of his works attest. He was writing in prose the history of his house and of his own campaigns, and he was adding frequently to his stock of French verses, of which the authorized edition of his writings contains about forty thousand.

"He was very sure," wrote Voltaire in 1759, "that both his

verses and his prose were much above my prose and my verses, as to the substance; but he believed that, as to the form, I could, in my quality of Academician, give a certain turn to his writings."

These words were not written with benevolent intention; but perhaps they suggest the truth. This great general did not appear to value himself upon his victories; but, keenly coveting the glory of the poet, he may have indulged the hope of one day enjoying it. And, indeed, the wonder is that a man who wrote so many pretty good pieces and some very good lines should not have occasionally risen to the degree of excellence which the world accepts. He wrote a fable or two, which appear to need only a touch from the hand of a Lafontaine to be good French fables. He wrote a few epigrams, odes, and epistles, which seem to want nothing but a certain *tournure* from the pen of Voltaire, to be all that the author wished them to be.

Frederic had just given a new proof of the excessive value which he put upon the verse-making talent. Among the great number of young men whose dawning promise Voltaire had nourished and encouraged was Baculard d'Arnaud, who had written three tragedies (one upon the massacre of St. Bartholomew), neither of which was ever produced, and only one was printed. For many years he had been a needy hanger-on of literature. Several of Voltaire's letters to his man of business, the Abbé Moussinot, end with a request in his favor: "One more louis d'or to Baculard d'Arnaud;" "Instead of twenty-four francs, give D'Arnaud thirty livres, when he comes." Voltaire, at length, procured him the appointment of Paris letter-writer to the King of Prussia, which raised him from a condition approaching beggary to one of tolerable ease, the salary being a thousand francs a year. D'Arnaud, in the fashion of the time, mingled verse with his items of literary and philosophical news. He, too, could compose very pretty and graceful verses, which gave the king, as they had once given Voltaire, an exaggerated estimate of his abilities. In 1750, Frederic, as if despairing of Voltaire, invited D'Arnaud to Berlin, and settled upon him a pension of five thousand francs per annum. He completed the bewilderment of the young man by addressing him a poetical epistle, in which Vol-

taire was spoken of as the setting sun of French literature, and Baculard d'Arnaud as the rising luminary of the same.

“ Déjà l'Apollon de la France
S'achemine à sa décadence ;
Venez briller à votre tour,
Elevez-vous s'il baisse encore ;
Ainsi le couchant d'un beau jour
Promet une plus belle aurore.”

D'Arnaud, in the spring of 1750, took up his abode in Berlin, where, from being a Paris nobody, he found himself in a position to show these verses in the most distinguished drawing-rooms of the kingdom, with his own verses in reply, modestly declining the royal compliment. An edition of his poems at once appeared, dedicated to the king, and preceded by an epistle to Voltaire, in which the young poet spoke of him as

“ Mon maître, mon ami, mon père dans les arts.”

The suddenness and splendor of his fortune were, it must be confessed, a severe trial of the good sense of a gazetteer of Paris, thirty-two years of age.

Frederic, meanwhile, held Voltaire to his engagement, which was to pass part of the summer of 1750 at Potsdam and Berlin, on his way to Italy. Voltaire meant to concede no more, and hesitated to concede even so much. His better instinct warned him not to venture again within the personal influence of a king who, as he often said, could caress with one hand and scratch with the other. But he had made too many promises to be able to refuse without giving just offense to the most shining personage of the time, whose protection both himself and his philosophic allies might one day need. He had already been attacked in the citadel of his position by the resuscitation of Crébillon. The rasping, satirical Fréron, whom Voltaire sweetly named “a worm from Desfontaines's carcass,” had begun his editorial career of defaming the good and exalting the bad. For many a year to come, he was to earn the good-will of the Boyer faction by assailing, with equal tact and pertinacity, Voltaire, Marmontel, Diderot, and their friends. The Boyers, full of blind confidence, were just beginning that last, long, besotted struggle to crush the intellect of France, which only ended with the explosion that scattered them to the ends of Europe. They had begun to refuse the

sacraments to dying Jansenists who could not show a *billet de confession*, a certificate declaring that they had accepted the Bull Unigenitus. Diderot had already been in prison, and all things in France wore an ill aspect for the little band of audacious, half-enlightened spirits who were to begin to save her.

The King of Prussia continued his importunities. "You are like bad Christians," he wrote: "you put off your conversion from one day to another." Again: "Come, at least, to correct my eulogium of our officers killed in the last war, a poem full of faults, in which I take more interest than in all my other works." D'Arnaud, too, wrote to "my dear Apollo," informing him that he was expected with the greatest impatience in Prussia, and that the king would make a festival of his coming. Apollo may have deemed the letter of the lucky Baculard a little familiar, but he replied to it with his usual gayety.

According to Marmontel, it was this Baculard d'Arnaud who was the occasion of Voltaire's suddenly conquering his reluctance to set out. The vivacious Marmontel, writing forty years after the event, may have unconsciously heightened the comic effects of the scenes which he relates, as he certainly misunderstood some of his facts. He tells us that Voltaire, unwilling to travel without Madame Denis, asked the king to give him twenty thousand francs to defray the additional expense. The king, according to Marmontel, refused this modest demand, which transported Voltaire with fury. "Look," said he to me, "at this meanness in a king! He has barrels of gold, and he won't give a poor twenty thousand francs for the pleasure of seeing Madame Denis at Berlin! But he shall give them, or I myself will not go." The celebrated scenes in Marmontel's Memoirs which follow this anecdote are a curious example of the manner in which falsehood inevitably gathers about a famous name. Marmontel continues: —

"A comical incident happened, which ended this dispute. One morning, as I was going to see him, I found his friend, Thieriot, in the garden of the Palais-Royal, and, as I was always on the watch for literary news, I asked him if he had heard any. 'Yes,' said he, 'some that is very curious; you are going to M. de Voltaire's, and there you shall hear it; for I shall go there as soon as I have taken my coffee.'

"Voltaire was writing in his bed when I went in. In his turn, he asked me, 'What's the news?'

"'I know none,' said I; 'but Thieriot, whom I met in the Palais-Royal, says he has something very interesting to tell you. He is coming.'

"'Well, Thieriot,' said he, 'you have some curious news?'

"'Oh! very curious; and news that will please you in particular,' answered Thieriot, with his sardonic laugh, and the nasal twang of a Capuchin.

"'Let's hear; what have you to tell?'

"'I have to tell you that Baculard d'Arnaud has arrived at Potsdam, and that the King of Prussia has received him with open arms.'

"'With open arms!'

"'And Arnaud has presented him with an epistle.'

"'Very bombastical and very insipid?'

"'Not at all; very fine, — so fine that the king has answered it by another epistle.'

"'The King of Prussia, an epistle to Arnaud! No, no, Thieriot; they have been poking fun at you.'

"'I don't know what you call fun; but I have the two epistles in my pocket.'

"'Let's see, quick. Let me read these masterpieces of poetry. What insipidity! what meanness! how egregiously stupid!' said he, in reading the epistle of D'Arnaud. Then, passing to that of the king, he read a moment in silence and with an air of pity. But when he came to these verses, —

'Voltaire's a setting sun,
But you are in your dawn,'

he started up, and jumped from his bed, bounding with rage: 'Voltaire a setting sun, and Baculard in his dawn! And it is a king who writes this enormous folly! Let him think only of reigning!'

"It was with difficulty that Thieriot and I could prevent ourselves from bursting into laughter to see Voltaire in his shirt, dancing with passion, and addressing himself to the King of Prussia. 'I'll go,' said he; 'yes, I'll go, and teach him to distinguish between men;' and from that moment the journey was decided upon.

"I have suspected that the King of Prussia intentionally gave him this spur, and without that I doubt whether he would have gone, so angry was he at the refusal of the twenty thousand francs; not at all from avarice, but from indignation at not having obtained what he asked.

"Obstinate to excess by character and by system, he had, even in little things, an incredible repugnance to yield, and to renounce what he had resolved on."

It seems a pity to spoil so amusing a story, and one which has passed current so long. But we perceive from the letters of Voltaire, D'Arnaud, and the king that Marmontel's forty years had deceived him. Voltaire was cognizant of all the movements of the young poet; congratulated him on his good fortune at every stage of it; congratulated the king upon getting him; busied himself with procuring for the king another Paris correspondent; and alluded, in exquisite verse, to the king's sorry comparison of the rising and the setting sun. He certainly did feel all the indecency of that comparison, and doubtless showed that he did in Marmontel's presence. It did not diminish his sense of its unworthiness when he found the verses circulating everywhere in Paris:—

“ Je touche à mes soixante hivers ;
 Mais si tant de lauriers divers
 Ombragent votre jeune tête,
 Grand homme, est-il donc bien honnête
 De déponiller mes cheveux blancs
 De quelques feuilles négligées,
 Que déjà l'Envie et le Temps
 Ont, de leurs détestables dents,
 Sur ma tête à demi rongées ? ”¹

Falling into a lighter strain, he says to Frederic, “ What a devil of a Marcus Antoninus you are, to scratch so with one hand, while you protect with the other ! ”

With regard to Madame Denis and the twenty thousand francs, Marmontel's memory deceived him completely. That lady was to remain at Paris in charge of her uncle's house, assisted in out-of-door business and otherwise by Longchamp. There was never the least suggestion of her going to Berlin until after Voltaire's arrival there, when the king, out of the abundance of his barrels of gold, offered her a pension for life of four thousand francs a year, if she would come to Berlin and keep her uncle's house. There was, it is true, a momentary difficulty with regard to money. May 8, 1750, Voltaire, writing to the king upon the obstacles to his leaving and the little pleasure he felt able to bestow on his arrival, proceeded thus:—

¹ I approach my sixtieth winter; but if so many kinds of laurel shade your young head, great man, is it then quite worthy of you to despoil my white hairs of some neglected leaves, which already Envy and Time have, with their detestable teeth, half gnawed upon my head?

“There is still one other difficulty. I am going now to speak, not at all to the king, but to the man who enters into the detail of human miseries. I am rich, and even very rich, for a man of letters. I have, as they say in Paris, ‘mounted a house,’ where I live like a philosopher, with my family and my friends. Such is my situation. Yet it is impossible for me to incur at present an extraordinary expenditure; first, because it has cost me a great deal to set up my little establishment: in the second place, the affairs of Madame du Châtelet, mixed with my own, have cost me still more. I pray you, according to your philosophic custom, put majesty aside, and allow me to say that I am not willing to be an expense to you. I cannot have a good traveling carriage, and set out with the help necessary to a sick man, and provide for the expenses of my house during my absence, with less than four thousand German crowns. If Mettra, one of the exchange dealers of Berlin, is willing to advance me that sum, I will secure him upon that part of my property which is the most unquestionable.”

The king replied to this letter in forty of his sprightliest verses; but added to his merry lines a few sentences in prose: “As the Sieur Mettra might object to a letter of exchange in verse, I cause to be sent to you one in proper form by his correspondent, which will be of more value than my jingle.”

The letter of exchange, which was for sixteen thousand francs, arrived in due time. There was never any question between them with regard to money. The king, generally so frugal and exact in business, as able men are, was profuse towards him, and pressed money upon him.

Another of Marmontel’s anecdotes of this period is equally entertaining, and may be accepted as founded upon fact. It belongs to the class of stories which, being often told, gain a little in point, and lose a little in truth, every year; until, after the lapse of forty years, they must be taken with liberal allowance:—

“I again saw a singular instance of this obstinacy of Voltaire’s, just before his departure to Prussia. He had taken a fancy to carry a cutlass with him on his journey, and, one morning, when I was at his house, a bundle of them was brought, that he might choose one. But the cutler wanted twenty francs for the one that pleased him, and Voltaire took it into his head that he would give but fifteen. He then begins to calculate in detail what it may be worth. He adds that the cutler bears in his face the character of an honest man, and

that, with such good faith written on his forehead, he cannot but confess that the instrument will be well paid for at fifteen francs. The cutler accepts the eulogy on his face, but answers that, as an honest man, he has but one word; that he asks no more than the thing is worth; and that, were he to sell it at a lower price, he should wrong his children.

“‘What! you have children, have you?’ asked Voltaire.

“‘Yes, sir, I have five, three boys and two girls, the youngest of whom is just twelve.’

“‘Well, we’ll think about placing your boys and marrying your girls. I have friends in the treasury; I have some credit in the public offices. But let’s finish this little affair: here are your fifteen francs; say no more about it.’

“The good cutler was confused in thanking Voltaire for the protection with which he was pleased to honor him; but he still kept to his first word about the price of the cutlass, and did not abate one sou. I abridge this scene, which lasted a quarter of an hour, by the turns of eloquence and seduction that Voltaire employed in vain, not to save five francs, — that he would have given to a beggar, — but to prevail by the power of persuasion. He was obliged to yield, and, with a troubled, indignant, embarrassed air, threw upon the table the five-franc piece that he relinquished so unwillingly. The cutler, when he had got his money, returned him thanks for his favors, and went away.

“‘I am very glad,’ said I, in a low voice, as I saw him go out.

“‘Of what?’ asked Voltaire angrily. ‘What are you glad of?’

“‘That this honest man’s family is no longer to be pitied. His sons will soon be placed; his daughters married; and he, in the mean time, has sold his cutlass for what he wanted, and you have paid it, in spite of all your eloquence.’

“‘And this is what you are glad of, you obstinate Limosin?’

“‘Oh, yes; I am quite pleased; if he had yielded to you, I believe I should have beaten him.’

“‘Do you know,’ said he, laughing in his sleeve, after a moment’s silence, ‘that if Molière had been witness to such a scene he would have turned it to some profit?’

“‘Indeed,’ said I, ‘it would have been the counterpart to that of M. Dimanche.’

“It was thus that with me his anger, or rather his petulance, always terminated in gentleness and friendship.”

Only one formality remained to be complied with. “I have the honor,” Voltaire would sometimes say, when his conven-

ience required it, "to be a *domestique du roi*." A gentleman-in-ordinary of the chamber, who was also the king's historiographer, could not leave the kingdom without the king's permission, and he resolved to ask it in person. On two occasions he had been charged with public business of high importance, on leaving France for a visit to the Prussian court. He went to Compiègne, where the King of France was, and, seeking an audience, asked the required permission and the king's orders. The tradition is that he was coldly received. Longchamp relates that the king merely said, "You can set out when you wish," and turned his back. Madame de Pompadour was more gracious. "When I took leave of Madame de Pompadour," he wrote to his niece, "she charged me to present her respects to the King of Prussia. A commission could not be given more agreeably or with more grace. She put into it all her modesty, saying, *If I dared*, and, *I ask pardon of the King of Prussia for taking this liberty*."

Returning to Paris, he gave his last orders to Longchamp, who was to receive part of his revenues during his absence, and furnish Madame Denis with one hundred louis a month for household expenses. If that allowance should be found insufficient, Longchamp was to inform him of the fact, when he would authorize him to provide "a reasonable addition." He expected to be absent three or four months at most. To the last hour he seems to have had misgivings; he implored the D'Argentals to *pardon* his journey, however severely they might judge his new tragedies, which he was still correcting. This visit to the King of Prussia, he said to his friends, had become a duty which, after two years of promises, he could no longer honorably postpone.

He left to the Boyers of France last proofs of his affection in the form of two little tracts of amusing satire: one called "Sincere Thanksgiving to a Charitable Man," in which he reviewed a priestly reviler of Montesquieu, Pope, and Locke. The zealous priest had laboriously attempted to prove that "the partisans of natural religion" are all enemies of the Christian religion. Voltaire congratulated him upon his success in proving that the men in every age and land who had shown the most love of truth and the greatest diligence in its investigation had been hostile to the claims of ecclesiastics.

“Nothing could be said more sensible or more useful to Christianity.” The other part at parting was a leaf entitled “Extract from a Decree of the Sacred Congregation of Rome upon a Libel called Letters upon the Twentieth.” This was a broad burlesque of the claim of the clergy to be exempt from taxation. He little thought that he was exiling himself from his native haunts for twenty-eight years by these merry effusions.

“As it is clear that the world is about to come to an end, and that Anti-Christ has come already, the said Anti-Christ having sent several circular letters to some of the bishops of France, in which he has had the audacity to treat them as Frenchmen and as subjects of the king, Satan has joined himself to the Man of Iniquity, in order to put the abomination of desolation into the holy place; which Satan has, to that end, composed a book worthy of him,—a book heretical, savoring of heresy, rash, and unseemly. He strives to prove in the said book that ecclesiastics form part of the body of the nation, instead of maintaining that they are substantially its masters, as they formerly taught. He advances that those who enjoy one third of the revenues of the state should contribute at least one third to the state’s support; not remembering that our brethren were created to possess all and give nothing. The said book, moreover, is notoriously filled with impious maxims drawn from natural law, the rights of the people, the fundamental laws of the kingdom, and other pernicious prejudices, tending wickedly to strengthen the royal authority, to cause more money to circulate in the kingdom of France, to relieve poor ecclesiastics now holily oppressed by rich ones.

“For these reasons, it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to cause the said book to be burned, in anticipation of doing the same to the author of it, who served in this matter as the secretary of Satan. We demand, moreover, and command that our first-fruits be punctually paid. We condemn Satan to drink holy water at supper every Friday, and we enjoin it upon him to enter into the body of all those who have read his book. Done at Rome, in *Sainte-Marie sans Minerve*, at twenty-five o’clock, May 20, 1750.

“Signed, Coglione-Coglionaccio, Cardinal-President, and, lower, Cazzo-Culo, Secretary of the Holy Office.”

This was his parting word to the keeper of the Dauphin’s conscience and the bestower of the church’s fat things. It was not forgotten.

Berlin is now twenty hours from Paris. Voltaire, who had

a king to order relays of horses for his convenience, accomplished the journey in twenty-five days ; but then he lost several days through a mistake. That precious time, he wrote, which ought to have been employed in rendering " Rome Sauvée " less unworthy of the theatre, he wasted in giving himself a series of indigestions. He left Paris June 15, 1750. July 10th he reached Sans-Souci, near Potsdam, the country palace of the King of Prussia. seventeen miles southwest of Berlin.

What a reception was his ! From a king who told him he was welcome to go, he had come to a king who practiced every seductive art to make him willing to remain. The suite of rooms assigned him in the palace was the one formerly occupied by Marshal Saxe. He was left at absolute liberty. If he wished to dine alone, he had but to indicate the wish. If he desired to entertain company, the king's kitchen and store-room were at his command. The king's horses, carriages, grooms, coachmen, all were at his orders, to use, to send, to lend. If he was disposed to labor, no one interrupted him ; if he strolled abroad, his privacy was respected. The whole court smiles upon the king's favorite. The queen, the queen-mother, the princesses, the princes, the ambassadors, the nobles, all the king's circle of officers and friends, paid assiduous court to him ; and the people of Berlin, who looked towards the court from a great imaginary distance, regarded him with intense curiosity.

At the moment of his arrival preparations were going forward for a grand carousal in the style of Louis XIV., to which the nobility of the kingdom were invited. This magnificent festival, which took place at Berlin, in August, 1750, was an assemblage of everything Prussia could boast of the splendid and the entertaining. Balls, fire-works, concerts, operas, plays, succeeded one another. The court-yard of the royal palace was turned into an amphitheatre, surrounded by ranges of seats, one above another, with decorated boxes in the rear for the king and chosen guests, and, in the midst, an extensive, oblong arena for the exercises. Three thousand troops lined this arena, and guarded the avenues leading to it. Thousands of spectators were present. When all was in readiness, and every eye was directed toward the royal box to catch the first glimpse of the king, a buzz and murmur were

heard in all parts of the inclosure: "*Voltaire! Voltaire! Voltaire!*" He was seen crossing the arena, attended by a number of lords, and walking toward one of the boxes. Soon the king and his family entered, and the performance began. Four quadrilles, or, as Voltaire styled them, "four little armies," entered, of mounted knights, Roman, Carthaginian, Greek, Persian, all superbly costumed and armed, with a prince of the royal house at the head of each. One of these quadrilles came in at each corner of the amphitheatre; in a moment, the great arena was one glitter of prancing horses and gorgeous chevaliers, marching and counter-marching, wheeling and manœuvring, to the sound of the best martial music then attainable. The usual exercises of the tourney followed.

Voltaire could not resist the fascination of the spectacle. "Not the least confusion," he wrote home to D'Argental; "no noise; all the assembly seated at ease, and silently attentive." The Princess Amelia gave the prizes to the victors. "It was Venus awarding the apple. The Prince Royal won the first prize. He had the air of a hero of Amadis. You can form no just idea of the beauty, the singularity, of the spectacle; the whole terminated by a supper of ten tables and a ball. This is fairy-land." It was, at once, a carousal of Louis XIV. and a Chinese feast of lanterns; for the amphitheatre and its approaches were illuminated by forty-six thousand small lanterns of glass.

The Princess Amelia was not ill-pleased to receive an "impromptu" from the poet, penciled, as she could presume, at the moment of her bestowal of the prize: —

"Jamais dans Athène et dans Rome,
On n'eut de plus beaux jours, ni de plus digne prix.
J'ai vu le fils de Mars sous les traits de Paris,
Et Vénus qui donnait la pomme."

The master and creator of all this magnificence redoubled his solicitations. He was a little rough on one occasion, which might have warned a Frenchman that he was in a country that could buy French polish, but could never be France. Imagine this colloquy on Voltaire's arrival at Potsdam: —

VOLTAIRE. — "Madame de Pompadour did me the honor to charge me with her respects to your majesty."

FREDERIC. — "I don't know her."

It was blunt. Voltaire did not report the response to the lady. He was polite for two. In a few pretty verses, he contrived, without falsehood, to inform her that her compliments had *reached* the person for whom they were intended. Her myrtles, he added, were now blended with his laurels. Then, —

"J'ai l'honneur, de la part d'Achille,
De rendre grâces à Vénus."¹

If all Frederic's familiars had been as politic, Prussia might have had one enemy the less in the Seven Years' War.

Voltaire did not yield to the king's solicitations without a struggle. He consulted his niece, Madame Denis, upon the change of residence proposed for them both. August 14th, he wrote to her thus: —

"The King of Prussia makes me his chamberlain, gives me one of his orders, twenty thousand francs a year, and to you four thousand a year for life, if you are willing to come and keep house for me at Berlin, as you do at Paris. You lived well at Landau with your husband. I swear to you that Berlin is a better place than Landau, and that there are better operas here. Reflect; consult your heart. You will tell me that the King of Prussia must be very fond of verses. He is, indeed, a French author born at Berlin. He has come to the conclusion that, all things considered, I should be more useful to him than D'Arnaud. I have forgiven the trifling polite verses which his Prussian majesty addressed to my young pupil, in which he spoke of him as the rising sun, very brilliant, and of me as the setting sun, dim enough. He scratches still, sometimes, with one hand, while he caresses with the other; but we must not mind that so much. If you consent, he will have near him both the rising and the setting sun, and, for his own part, he will be in his meridian, writing prose and verse as much as he pleases, since he has no more battles to give. I have little time to live. Perhaps it is pleasanter to die in his fashion at Potsdam than in the manner of an inhabitant of a parish at Paris. After my death you will return thither, with your four thousand livres of dowry. If these propositions suit you, you will pack up your effects in the spring; and, for me, I shall go, toward the end of this autumn, on pilgrimage to Italy, to see St. Peter's of Rome, the Pope, the Venus de Medicis, and the subterranean city. I have always mourned at the thought of dying without seeing Italy. We should meet in the month of May next. I

¹ I have the honor, on the part of Achilles, to return thanks to Venus.

have four verses from the King of Prussia for his Holiness. It would be pleasant to carry to the Pope four French verses from a German and heretical monarch, and to bring back to Potsdam some indulgences. You see that he treats Popes better than he treats ladies. He will compose no verses for you; but you will find good company here; you will have a good house. The king our master must first consent to this. That will be, I think, very indifferent to him. It matters little to a King of France in what place the most useless of his twenty-two or twenty-three millions of subjects passes his life; but it would be frightful to live without you."

Madame Denis, a true child of Paris, was proof against these arguments. She wrote a reply, earnestly dissuading him. The mere rank of the king, she thought, made friendship impossible between them. Kings, too, changed their minds and their favorites. If he gave himself to a king, he would bitterly repent it; his life as the servant of a foreign potentate could only be slavery disguised. This letter he sent to the king's cabinet; whence soon he received an answer, in which Frédéric le Grand, as Voltaire now habitually called him, condescended to refute Madame Denis's reasoning.

[Berlin, August 23, 1750.] "I have seen the letter which your niece writes you from Paris. The affection which she has for you wins my esteem. If I were Madame Denis, I should think as she does; but, being what I am, I think otherwise. I should be in despair to be the cause of my enemy's unhappiness; and how could I wish the misfortune of a man whom I esteem, whom I love, and who sacrifices to me his country and all that is dearest to humanity? No, my dear Voltaire, if I could foresee that your removal hither could turn the least in the world to your disadvantage, I should be the first to dissuade you from it. Yes, I should prefer your happiness to my extreme pleasure in possessing you. But you are a philosopher; I am one also. What is there more natural, more simple, more according to the order of things, than that philosophers, made to live together, united by the same studies, by the same tastes, and by a similar way of thinking, should give one another that satisfaction? I respect you as my master in composition and in knowledge; I love you as a virtuous friend. What slavery, what unhappiness, what change, what inconstancy of fortune, is there to fear in a country where you are esteemed as much as in your own, and in the house of a friend who has a grateful heart? I have not the foolish presumption to believe that Berlin equals Paris. If wealth, grandeur, and magnificence make a city agreeable, we yield

to Paris. If good taste, perhaps more generally diffused, exists any where in the world, I know and I agree that it is at Paris. But do you not carry that taste with you wherever you are? We have some organs which give us sufficient means of applauding you, and in point of sentiments we do not yield to any country in the world. I respected the friendship which bound you to Madame du Châtelet; but, after her, I was one of your oldest friends. What! because you retire to my house, it will be said that that house becomes a prison for you? What! because I am your friend, I shall be your tyrant? I confess to you that I do not understand such logic as that, and I am firmly persuaded that you will be very happy here; that you will be regarded as the father of letters and of people of taste; and that you will find in me all the consolations which a man of your merit can expect from one who esteems him. Good-night."¹

In conversation he was even more affectionate and more urgent. In such circumstances, the poet who deliberates is lost. It is himself who tells us how he yielded to the royal seducer: "The large blue eyes of the king, his sweet smile, and his siren voice, his five battles, his extreme love of retirement and of occupation, of verses and of prose, as well as attentions to turn one's head, delicious conversation, liberty, his rank forgotten in our intercourse, a thousand marks of regard, which even from a private individual would be seducing, — all that bewildered my brain. I gave myself to him with passion, blindly, and without reflection."² It was hard indeed for such a man to say No to such a suppliant. "He took my hand," as he afterwards recorded, "to kiss it. I kissed his, and made myself his slave."

As usual in such cases, repentance followed quick. No sooner had he given his word than his heart yearned toward his friends in Paris: he knew not what to say to them; he knew not how to explain this inconstancy of the most constant of men. Writing to the D'Argentals, August 28th, he begins without a beginning: —

"Judge, my dearest angels, if I am not in some degree excusable. Judge by the letter which the king wrote to me from his quarters to mine, — a letter which replies to the very wise, very elegant, very powerful reasons that my niece adduces upon a mere presentiment. I send her that letter; let her show it to you, I beg, and you will think

¹ 22 Œuvres de Frédéric le Grand, 255.

² Voltaire to Richelieu. August 31, 1751.

you are reading a letter of Trajan or Marcus Aurelius. Not the less is my heart torn. I yield to my destiny, and I throw myself, head foremost [*la tête la première*], into the abyss of the fatality which conducts us. Ah, my dear angels, have pity upon the struggles that pass within me, and the mortal anguish with which I tear myself from you! I have almost always lived apart from you; but formerly it was persecution the most unjust, the most cruel, the most unrelenting, that separated us. To-day it is the first man in the universe, it is a crowned philosopher, who takes me from you. How do you suppose I could resist? How forget the barbarous manner in which I have been treated in my country? Do you bear in mind that they took as a pretext the 'Mondain'? That is to say, the most innocent *badinage*, which I would read at Rome to the Pope. Do you remember, I say, that base enemies and infamous bigots used that pretext to have me exiled? You will tell me that fifteen years have passed since that was done. No, my angels, only one day; for those atrocious wrongs are always recent wounds."

Madame Denis could hardly come to Prussia after having expressed herself so freely with regard to the Prussian king. She remained at Paris, mistress of her uncle's house there, which he still maintained at an expense of thirty thousand francs a year, as if to preserve for himself a retreat in case his niece proved a true prophet. Frederic himself undertook to procure the consent of the King of France, which was given without delay. The French king took from him his office of historiographer, but allowed him to retain his title of gentleman-in-ordinary of the chamber and his pension of two thousand francs a year. Madame du Hausset, the *femme de chambre* of Madame de Pompadour, has been so good as to inform us what Louis XV. thought of Voltaire's abandonment of his country. That monarch was accustomed to express himself with considerable freedom in Pompadour's boudoir, with a few of his familiars around him, and the *femme de chambre* within hearing distance. He greatly admired his grandfather, Louis XIV., and all his lavish, magnificent ways; and he loved to imitate him, even in the modest pensions bestowed by Louis XIV. upon Racine, Boileau, Molière, Corneille, and others, who give him all the "glory" that remains to his name. Louis XV., Madame du Hausset assures us, was proud of the celebrity of Voltaire, but "feared him, and did not esteem him." One evening, the conversation turned upon his

removal to Berlin. The king and Madame de Pompadour may both have heard the substance of a very long letter written in August, 1750, by Voltaire to Richelieu, in which the author recounted some of the outrages to which he had been subjected through the machinations and misrepresentations of the mitred *âne* of Mirepoix. The king defended himself: —

“‘I have treated Voltaire,’ said he, ‘as well as Louis XIV. treated Racine and Boileau. I gave him, as Louis XIV. gave Racine, the post of gentleman-in-ordinary, and some pensions. It is not my fault if he has committed follies, and if he aspires to be a chamberlain, to have a cross, and to sup with a king. That is not the fashion in France; and, as there are more men of genius and more great lords here than in Prussia, I should be obliged to have a very large table to hold them all’ (counting upon his fingers): ‘Mauvertuis, Fontenelle, Lamotte, Voltaire, Piron, Destouches, Montesquieu, the Cardinal de Polignac.’

“‘Your majesty forgets,’ said some one, ‘D’Alembert and Clairault.’

“‘And Crébillon,’ continued the king, ‘and La Chaussée.’

“‘And Crébillon junior,’ added some one else; ‘he ought to be more amiable than his father. And there is still the Abbé Prévost and the Abbé d’Olivet.’

“‘Very well,’ rejoined the king, ‘during the last twenty-five years, *all that* would have dined or supped with me.’”¹

The King of France being thus disposed towards him, Madame de Pompadour could not wish him to return to Paris. She could exile or appoint a minister more easily than she could then protect “a philosopher,” and Voltaire had no other hope of a safe return. He had written a long letter to Richelieu, apologizing both to her and to him for his apparent “desertion.” He recalled old grievances and related new ones. He said that the Bishop of Mirepoix had so poisoned against him the minds of the Dauphin and the queen that he had no prospect in France but an old age of sad obscurity or constant apprehension.

“The old Bishop of Mirepoix [said he] has just burst out against me on the subject of a little piece, imputed to me, entitled ‘The Voice of the People and the Sage,’ a production which has called forth so many others, such as the ‘Voice of the Pope,’ the ‘Voice of the

¹ Mémoires de Madame du Hausset.

Priest,' the 'Voice of the Layman,' the 'Voice of the Capuchin,' etc. . . . Could you not have the goodness to represent to Madame de Pompadour that I have precisely the same enemies as herself? If she is piqued at my desertion, and if she regards me as a fugitive, I must remain where I am; but if she believes that I can be reckoned among those who, in literature, can be of some use, if she wishes me to return, could you not say to her that you know my attachment to her, that she alone could make me leave the King of Prussia, and that I left France only because I was persecuted there by those who hate her?"

But she made no sign. For the present, therefore, he had no choice but to remain where he was.

Madame du Hausset adds a trifling fact. Her companion in office (*ma camarade*) returned to the palace, one day, indignant at a "profanation" she had witnessed in the streets of Paris. She had heard a peddler of pictures crying,—

"Here is Voltaire, that famous Prussian! Do you see him, with his big bear-skin cap on to keep out the cold? Only six sous for the famous Prussian!"

APPENDIX I.

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

RELATING TO VOLTAIRE AND TO HIS WORKS, ARRANGED ACCORDING TO THE DATES OF PUBLICATION SO FAR AS KNOWN, AND WITH THEIR TITLES TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH.

[Collectors may find the original titles of the following works, down to the year 1842, in the "Bibliographie Voltairienne" of J. M. Quérard, Paris, 1842. The rest are to be found in publishers' catalogues issued since January, 1842.]

- A Critical Letter upon the New Tragedy of Œdipe. By Father Folard, Jesuit. Paris. 1719.
- A Criticism of the Tragedy of Œdipe. By the Comedian, Le Grande. 36 pages, 8vo. Paris. 1719.
- A Letter to Madame ———, containing a Criticism of the Œdipe of M. de Voltaire. By M. Van Effen. Paris. 1719.
- A Letter from an Abbé to a Country Gentleman, containing Observations upon the Style and Thoughts of the Tragedy of Œdipe, and Reflections upon the last Letter of M. de Voltaire. Paris. 1719.
- A Letter to M. de Voltaire upon the New Tragedy of Œdipe. By De Longpierre. Paris. 1719.
- Defense of Sophocles, or Remarks upon the Third Critical Letter of M. de Voltaire. By the Abbé Capperonier. Paris. 1719.
- Apology of Sophocles, or Remarks upon the Third Critical Letter of M. de Voltaire. By C. Capperonier. 8vo. Paris. 1719.
- A Letter from a Swedish Gentleman to M. ———, Professor of the French Language, upon the Tragedy of Œdipe. Paris. 1719.
- A Refutation of the Letter from a Swedish Gentleman upon the Tragedy of Œdipe. By M. D. ———. Paris. 1719.
- Defense of the New Tragedy of Œdipe of Voltaire. By L. Mannory, Advocate to the Parliament. Paris. 1719.
- A Reply to the Defense of the New Œdipe. By M. M. ———. Paris. 1719.
- A Letter from the Marquis of M—— to a Gentleman, his Friend, containing a Criticism of the Critics of M. de Voltaire's Œdipe. Paris. 1719.
- New Remarks upon the Œdipe of M. de Voltaire, and upon his Critical Letters, wherein Corneille is justified, etc. By the Abbé Gérard. Paris. 1719.
- The Satirical Journal Intercepted, or a Defense of M. Arouet de Voltaire and M. de La Motte. By the Sieur Bourguignon. 48 pages, 8vo. Paris. 1719.
- A Critical Letter, or Comparison of the three ancient epic Poems, the Iliad and Odyssey of Homer, and the Æneid of Virgil, with the League, or Henry the Great, of M. de Voltaire. By De Bellechaume. 15 pages, 8vo. Paris. 1724.
- A Second Letter upon the same subject, and by the same Author. 44 pages, 8vo. Paris. 1724.
- Literary Verities upon the Tragedy of Herod and Mariamne. By Messieurs the Abbé Desfontaines and Granet. 12mo. Paris. 1725.
- Three Letters to M. de ——— containing some Observations upon the Tragedy of Mariamne of M. de Voltaire. By J. J. Bel. 1 vol. 12mo. Paris. 1725.

- Apology for M. de Voltaire. By the Abbé Pellegrin. 12mo. Paris. 1725.
- Critical Observations upon the Tragedy of Herod and Mariamne of M. de Voltaire. By the Abbé Nadal. 12mo. Paris. 1725.
- A Criticism of the *Henriade*. The Hague. 1728.
- Critical Letters upon the *Henriade* of M. de Voltaire. By Saint-Hyacinthe. 50 pages, 8vo. London. 1728.
- Thoughts upon the *Henriade*. 23 pages, 8vo. London. Without date.
- Remarks upon M. Voltaire's Essay on the Epic Poetry of European Nations, etc. By Paul Rolli. London. 1728.
- A Defense of some Passages in *Paradise Lost* from the Hyper-Criticism of M. de Voltaire. By William Duncombe. London. 1728.
- Examination of the Essay upon Epic Poetry of M. de Voltaire. Translated from the English of Paul Rolli. By the Abbé Antonini. Paris. 1728.
- To the Author of the Epistle to Uranie, preceded by a Letter to M. Bignon. By Travenol. Paris. 1732.
- Reflections upon Jealousy, to serve as Commentary upon the last works of Voltaire. By Le Roy. 29 pages. Amsterdam. 1732.
- Remarks Historical and Critical upon the History of Charles XII. By M. de la Motraye. 12mo. Paris. 1732.
- Religion Defended, a Poem against the Epistle to Uranie. By F. M. C. Deschamps. Pamphlet, 46 pages. Paris. 1733.
- Vindication of the Authors censured in the Temple of Taste of M. de Voltaire. Critical Observations upon the Temple of Taste. By the Abbé Roy. 32 pages, 8vo. Paris. 1733.
- A Letter from M. ——— to a Friend on the Subject of the Temple of Taste of Voltaire. By the Abbé Goujet. Paris. 1733.
- Reply to, or Criticism upon, the Philosophical Letters of M. de Voltaire. By Le Coq de Villeray. 1 vol. 12mo. Reims. 1735.
- Letters in Reply to M. de Voltaire's Philosophical Letters upon the English. By the Abbé Molinier. Paris. 1735.
- Letter of M. de Bonneval upon the Criticism of M. de Voltaire's Philosophical Letters by the Abbé Molinier. Paris. 1735.
- Translation of a Letter of M. A. Cocchi to M. Rinuccini, Secretary of State at Florence, upon the *Henriade*. Paris. 1737.
- Upon the Thoughts of Pascal (by Voltaire). Paris and the Hague. 1735.
- Criticism of Voltaire's Comments upon the Thoughts of Pascal. By De Villeray. Basle. 1735.
- Letter of a Physicist upon the Philosophy of Newton, as popularized by M. de Voltaire. By Father Regnault. 46 pages, 12mo. Paris. 1738.
- Reflections upon the Philosophy of Newton. 82 pages, 12mo. Paris. 1738.
- Remarks upon the History of Charles XII. of Voltaire. By Neitz. 8vo. Frankfurt. 1738.
- The *Voltairemanie*, or Letter from a Young Advocate in Reply to the Libel of the Sieur de Voltaire entitled *The Preservative*, etc. By the Abbé Desfontaines. Paris. 1738.
- The Mediator between Voltaire and the Author of the *Voltairemanie*, a Letter to M. le Marquis de ———. By J. B. D. 12mo, 24 pages. Toulouse. 1739.
- Letter of M. ——— concerning a Pamphlet entitled *Life of Molière*. (By Voltaire.) Pamphlet, 24 pages. Paris. 1739.
- Disinterested Judgment concerning the Difference between M. de Voltaire and the Abbé Desfontaines. Pamphlet, 12mo. Paris. 1739.
- Examination and Refutation of the Elements of Newton's Philosophy by M. de Voltaire, with a Dissertation upon the Reflection and Refraction of Light. By J. Barrières. Paris. 1739.
- A Letter to M. de Voltaire upon his Work entitled *Replies to the Objections brought against the Philosophy of Newton*. 30 pages, 8vo. Paris. 1739.
- Examination and Refutation of the Elements of the Philosophy of Newton. By M. Jean Barrières. Paris. 1739.
- Examination and Refutation of some Opinions upon the Causes of the Reflection and Refraction of Light in the Work of M. Bagnières. By L. Le Ratz. 50 pages, 8vo. Paris. 1740.
- Remarks, Historical, Political, Mytholog-

- ical, and Critical, upon the Henriade. By Le Brun. The Hague. 1741.
- Remarks of a Polish Lord (Count Poniatowski) upon the History of Charles XII. of Voltaire. 12mo. The Hague. 1741.
- Letters upon the True Principles of Religion, wherein are examined the Work upon Religion Essential to Man, by Mademoiselle Hebrut; with the Defense of the Thoughts of Pascal against the Criticism of Voltaire, and three letters relative to the Philosophy of that poet. By D. R. Bouillier. 2 vols. 12mo. Amsterdam. 1741.
- Letter from an Actor of Lille upon the Tragedy of Mahomet. By M. de Voltaire. Pamphlet, 8vo. Paris. 1742.
- Sentiments of a Spectator of the Tragedy of Mahomet. By the Abbé Cahagne. Paris. 1742.
- Defense of the Thoughts of Pascal. By D. R. Bouillier. Paris. 1742.
- Letter from a Quaker to François de Voltaire, occasioned by his Remarks upon the English. (By Josias Martin.) 1 vol. 8vo. London. 1743.
- Discourse delivered at the Door of the French Academy by the Director to M. ———. (Attributed to Roy.) Paris. 1743.
- Letter to the Marquis de ——— upon the Mérope of M. de Voltaire, a Tragedy. By Aubert de la Chesmaye des Bois. Pamphlet, 8vo. Paris. 1743.
- A Criticism of Mérope. Pamphlet, 8vo. Paris. 1743.
- A Comparison of the two Méropes, Tragedies, by Maffei and by Voltaire. Pamphlet, 12mo. Paris. 1744.
- A Letter upon the Tragedy of Mérope, upon the Comedy of the School of Manners, and upon the Freemasons. Pamphlet, 12mo. Brussels. 1744.
- Reply of the Marquis Scipio de Maffei, author of the Italian Mérope, to M. de Voltaire, author of the French Mérope. Pamphlet, 12mo. Paris. 1744.
- The Birth of Tinsel and of her daughter, Mérope, a tale allegorical and critical. Pamphlet, 12mo. Paris. 1744.
- The only True Religion demonstrated against the Atheists, the Deists, and all the Sectarians. By Father Lefevre, Jesuit. 1 vol. 12mo. Paris. 1744.
- Examination of a Book entitled The Metaphysics of Newton. Translated from the German of L. M. Kahle. By G. de Saint-Blancard. Paris. 1744.
- Sincere Counsels to M. de Voltaire on the Subject of the Sixth Edition of his Poem upon the Victory of Fontenoy. Paris. 1745.
- Reflections upon a Printed Piece entitled The Battle of Fontenoy, a Poem. Dedicated to M. de Voltaire. (By Dromgold.) Paris. 1745.
- Boileau to Voltaire, a Satire. By Clément of Dijon. Paris. 1745.
- Collection of all the Pieces concerning the Suit between M. de Voltaire and the Sieur Travenol, violinist of the opera. Quarto. Paris. 1746.
- Letter from an Academician of Villefranche to M. de Voltaire upon his Reception Speech at the French Academy. Pamphlet, 4to. Paris. 1746.
- Discourse pronounced at the Academy by M. de Voltaire. (A burlesque.) Paris. 1746.
- Parallel between the Henriade and the Lurin. By the Abbé Batteux. Paris. 1746.
- Memoir in behalf of Louis Travenol against the Sieur Voltaire. By J. A. R. de Sauvigny. Pamphlet. Paris. 1746.
- The same, with the Poetical Triumph. (Published by L. Travenol, Jun., violinist of the Royal Academy of Music.) Paris. 1746.
- Revealed Religion, a Poem in Reply to that upon Natural Religion. By M. de Sauvigny. 8vo, 64 pages. Geneva and Paris. 1748.
- A Melancholy Epistle of the Chevalier Pompon to La Babiolle against good Taste, or an Apology for Sémiramis, a Tragedy of M. de Voltaire. Pamphlet in verse, 12mo. By Travenol. Paris. 1748.
- The Poet Reformed, or an Apology for the Sémiramis of V. By Favier. Pamphlet 8vo. Amsterdam. 1748.
- An Epistle to Philon upon the Tragedy of Sémiramis. In verse. Pamphlet, 12mo. By M. l'Abbé P. Paris. 1748.
- Comparison of the Sémiramis of M. de Voltaire and that of M. Crébillon. By Dupuy-Demportes. 46 pages, 8vo. Paris. 1748.
- A Criticism, Scene by Scene, of Sémiramis,

- a Tragedy by M. de Voltaire. Pamphlet, 8vo. Paris. 1748.
- A Critical Letter upon the Tragedy of Sémiramis. By Desforges. Pamphlet, 12mo. Paris. 1748.
- Letter to M. de Voltaire upon his Tragedy of Catilina. By Dupuy-Demportes. Pamphlet, 8vo. Paris. 1748.
- A Letter from Madame Sémiramis to Monsieur Catilina, arranged as a vaudeville. By a Songster of Paris. Pamphlet, 8vo. Paris. 1748.
- Observations upon Catilina (by Crébillon) and of Rome Sauvée (by Voltaire). Pamphlet, 12mo. Paris. 1749.
- Observations upon the Sémiramis of Voltaire, and upon the first Criticism of that Tragedy. By L. Mannory. 77 pages, 8vo. Paris. 1749.
- Natalica, an Indian Tale, or a Criticism of Catilina. By Desforges. Pamphlet, 12mo. Paris. 1749.
- A Letter to the Author of Nanine. By Guiard de Servigné, advocate of Rennes. Pamphlet, 12mo. Paris. 1749.
- Nanin and Nanine, a fragment of a tale translated from the Arabic. By L. D. V. Pamphlet, 8vo. Paris. 1749.
- Critical Reflections upon the Comedy of Nanine. By M. G. Pamphlet, 8vo. Nancy. 1749.
- Reflections upon the Tearful Comic (as exemplified in Voltaire's comedy of Nanine). By M. de C., of the Academy of Rochelle. 74 pages, 12mo. Paris. 1749.
- The printed Lies of M. Arouet de Voltaire. 8vo. Holland. 1750.
- Historical Dissertation upon the Works of M. de Voltaire. By Baculard d'Arnaud, of the Academy of Berlin. Pamphlet, 24 pages. 1750.
- A Comparison of the four Electras, of Sophocles, of Euripides, of M. de Crébillon, and of M. de Voltaire. By Gaillard. 124 pages, 12mo. The Hague. 1750.
- Letter to Madame the Countess of — upon the Tragedy of Oreste by M. de Voltaire, and upon the Comedy upon the Force of Nature, by M. N. Destouches. By L. de Sepmanville. Pamphlet, 12mo. Paris. 1750.
- The Voice of the Bigarrure, to the Authors of the Letters for and against the Immunities of the Clergy. Paris. 1750.
- The Voice of the Capuchins. By the Abbé Hervé. 8 pages, 8vo. Paris. 1750.
- The Voice of the Poet, and that of the Levite. 22 pages, 12mo. Paris. 1750.
- The Voice of the Poor Man. By Joseph Languet de Gergy, Archbishop of Toulouse. Paris. 1750.
- A Voice crying in the Wilderness. Paris. 1750.
- The Voice of the Rich Man. Paris. 1750.
- Memoir in Aid of a History of the Immunities of the Church, or the Ecclesiastical Conferences of Madame de —, or, if preferred, the Voice of the Woman. 23 pages, 12mo. Paris. 1750.
- The Voice of the Priest: very Humble and very Respectful Remonstrances, of the Clergy of the Second Order, to the King, on the Subject of the Twentieth. Paris. 1750. (Suppressed.)
- The Voice of the Christian and the Bishop. 12 pages, 12mo. Paris. 1750.
- Collection of the Voices for and against the Immunities of the Clergy. 126 pages, 12mo. Paris. 1750.
- It must Needs be that Offenses Come. 30 pages, 12mo. Paris. 1750. (Suppressed.)
- Voltaire, Ass, formerly Poet (containing satirical letters, parodies, and epigrams). 39 pages, 8vo. Paris. 1750.
- A Dissertation upon the Principal Tragedies, ancient and modern, which have appeared upon the subject of Electra, and, in particular, upon that of Sophocles. By M. Dumolard, member of several Academies. Pamphlet, 8vo. London. 1750.
- Abstract of the Electras. Pamphlet, 16 pages. Paris. 1750.
- Reflections upon the Tragedy of Oreste, in which is naturally placed the Comparison of that Piece with the Electra of M. de Crébillon. By De la Morlière. 47 pages, 12mo. Paris. 1750.
- Electra Avenged, or a Letter upon the Tragedy of Oreste and Electra. By M. le N. de C. Pamphlet, 12mo. Paris. 1750.
- Critical Response to the Voice of the Sage. 12mo, 88 pages. Paris. 1751.
- The Voice of the Pope, or Brief of our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XIV., conveying the condemnation of the Letters, *Ne repugnat*, etc., and of the Libel en-

- titled *The Voice of the Sage*, of Voltaire. In Latin and in French. 7 pages, 12mo. Paris. 1751.
- Refutations of a Libel entitled, *The Voice of the Sage and of the People*. 12mo, 35 pages. Paris. 1751.
- Dialogue between the Age of Louis XIV. and the Age of Louis XV. By Caraccioli. 12mo. The Hague. 1751.
- Thoughts Anti-Philosophical. By Allamand of Lausanne. 1 vol. 12mo. The Hague. 1751.
- Remarks Historical and Political upon the Anti-Machiavelli of Frederic II., as given by Voltaire. By L. H. de Hesse. Wismar. 1751.
- Refutation of a Falsehood, printed in the Age of Louis XIV. By F. L. C. Rival. 4to. Paris. 1752.
- Observations upon the Tragedy of the Duc de Foix of M. de Voltaire. By De la Morlière. Paris. 1752.
- Flemish Letters, or History of the Variations and Contradictions of the Pretended Natural Religion. By the Abbé Duhamel. 1 vol. 12mo. Lille. 1752.
- The Eight Philosophic Adventurers, or an unexpected meeting of Messieurs de Voltaire, d'Argens, Maupertuis, Prévôt, Crébillon, Mouchi, and de Mainvillers, in the Tavern of Madame Tripaudière. A comedy in prose. The Hague. 1752.
- Letter from M. de La Beaumelle to M. — upon what passed between him and Voltaire. Frankfurt. 1753.
- The Political Age of Louis XIV., or Letters of the Viscount Bolingbroke upon that subject, together with the pieces which formed the History of the Age of M. de Voltaire, and of his quarrels with Messrs. de Maupertuis and de La Beaumelle; followed by the Disgrace of that famous poet. 12mo, 495 pages. Siccopolis. (Frankfort.) 1753.
- Remarks upon the Age of Louis XIV. By La Beaumelle. Frankfurt. 1753.
- Critical Letters upon the Philosophical Letters of Voltaire. By D. R. Boullier, Protestant minister. Paris. 1753.
- A Dissertation upon the Italian Poetry, in which are interspersed some remarks on M. Voltaire's Essay on the Epic Poets. By Jos. Baretty. London. 1753.
- Response to the Supplement (by Voltaire) of the Age of Louis XIV. By M. de la Beaumelle. 12mo. 166 pages. Colmar. 1754.
- Narrative of the Quarrel of M. de la Beaumelle with M. de Voltaire. By M. Roques. Svo. Hanover. 1755.
- Memoir of M. de Voltaire, annotated by M. de la Beaumelle, preceded by a Letter to Madame Denis. Frankfurt. 1755.
- Reflections upon the Untrustworthiness of the Documents which M. de Voltaire has followed in treating (in his Abridgment of Universal History to our Days) the fragment entitled *Affaire of Genoa and Provence in 1746 and 1747*. By M. de la Porte. 8vo, 15 pages. Paris. 1755.
- Letter of M. de Bury to M. de Voltaire on the subject of his Abridgment of Universal History. 8vo. London. 1755.
- Criticism of the Universal History of M. de Voltaire upon the subject of Mohammed and Mohammedanism. 12mo, 43 pages. Paris. 1755.
- A Letter from Poinset Junior to a man of the olden time upon the Orphan of China, a tragedy by M. de Voltaire, represented for the first time August 20, 1755. Pamphlet, 8vo. Paris. 1755.
- Analysis of the Tragedy of the Orphan of China. By De la Morlière. 42 pages, 12mo. Paris. 1755.
- A Letter from Father Grisbourdon to M. de Voltaire upon the Poem of the Pucelle. By De Junquières. 11 pages, 12mo. Paris. 1756.
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- The Genius of Voltaire appreciated in all his works. By Charles Palissot. 12mo. Paris. 1806.
- Voltaire at the House of Ninon, a Vaudeville in one act and in prose. By Moreau and La Fortelle. Paris. 1806.
- Response of Voltaire to M. J. Chénier. By A. d'Aldequier. Paris. 1806.
- Boniface Carré, or the Coat of Voltaire. A Vaudeville in one act. Paris. 1806.
- My Residence with Voltaire, and Unpublished Letters written to me by that celebrated Man down to the last year of his life. 1 vol. 12mo. By Come Alexander Collini. Paris. 1807.
- The Infidel and Christian Philosophers, or the Last Hours of Voltaire and Addison contrasted. A poem. 4to. London. 1807.
- Voltaire, or the Triumph of Modern Phi-

- losophy. A Poem in eight cantos, with an Epilogue; followed by various Pieces in verse and in prose. By J. Berchoux. 1 vol. 8vo. Lyons. 1814.
- Commentary upon the Drama of Voltaire. By La Harpe. Printed after the autograph manuscript of that celebrated critic. Collected and published by M. Decroix. 1 vol. 8vo. Paris. 1814.
- The Voltairiade, or Adventures of Voltaire in the other World, occasioned by an event which happened in this. By M. J. Grambert. 8vo. 96 pages. Paris. 1815 and 1825.
- Parallel between the Literary Life of J. J. Rousseau and Voltaire. By A. Valsecchi. Pamphlet. Venice. 1816.
- The Philosophy of the Eighteenth Century unveiled by itself, a Work addressed to Fathers of Families, and to Christian Instructors, followed by observations upon the Notes with which Voltaire and Condorcet have accompanied the Thoughts of Pascal. By Gourjui. 2 vols. 8vo. Paris. 1816.
- Voltaire judged by the Facts. Anonymous. 8vo. 76 pages. Paris. 1817.
- The Political, Literary, and Moral Life of Voltaire, in which are refuted Condorcet and his other historians, by citing and comparing a great number of unknown and very curious facts. By Lapan. 8vo. Paris. 1817, 1819, and 1838.
- Voltaire's Cane and Rousseau's Writing-Desk. A dialogue in verse. By De Montburn. Pamphlet, 16 pages. Paris. 1817.
- Voltaire and his Genius, his Arrival and his Triumph in the other World, a Drama in three acts and in prose. A posthumous work of the late M. Bros, formerly honorary Canon of Meaux. Published by M. Crussaire, his testamentary executor. Paris. 1817.
- Philosophic Judgment upon Voltaire and J. J. Rousseau. By H. Azais. 8vo, 82 pages. Paris. 1817.
- Justification of the Works of Voltaire and the Forgiveness of his errors accorded by Alpha and Omega, a foreign Prince more just than his Enemies newly arrived here. Pamphlet, 8 pages. Paris. 1817.
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- Voltaire at Ferney. His Correspondence with the Duchess of Saxe-Gotha. Collected and edited by MM. Evariste, Bavoux, and A. F. 1 vol. 8vo. Paris. 1860.
- Voltaire and his School-Masters. An Episode of Classical Learning in France. By Alexis Pierron. 1 vol. 12mo. Paris. 1866.
- Voltaire, his Life and his Works. By the Abbé Maynard. 2 vols. 8vo. Paris. 1867.
- The True Voltaire, the Man and the Thinker. By Edouard de Pompery. A Biography. 1 vol. 8vo. Paris. 1867.
- Voltaire. 1 vol. 12mo. By David Frederick Strauss. 1870.
- Voltaire. By John Morley. 1 vol. 12mo. London. 1872.
- The True Letters of Voltaire to the Abbé Moussinot, published for the first time

- from the autographs in the National Library. By Courtat. 1 vol. 12mo. Paris. 1875.
- Life and Times of François-Marie Aronét, calling himself Voltaire. By Francis Espinasse. Vol. 1st. 8vo. London. 1876.
- Voltaire and French Society in the Eighteenth Century. A Biography in eight volumes. 8vo. By Gustave Desnoires-terres. Paris. 1876.
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- Voltaire with Houdon. A comedy in one act and in verse. By Georges Duval. Paris. 1880.
- The Folly-Book (*Sottisier*) of Voltaire. From the manuscripts in his Library at Petersburg. 1 vol. 8vo. Paris. 1880.
- Life of Voltaire. 2 vols. 8vo. By James Parton. Boston. 1881.

APPENDIX II.

A LIST OF THE WORKS OF VOLTAIRE,

IN THE ORDER, SO FAR AS KNOWN, OF THEIR PUBLICATION, WITH THE TITLES TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH.

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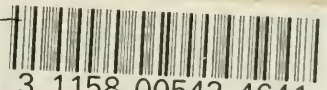
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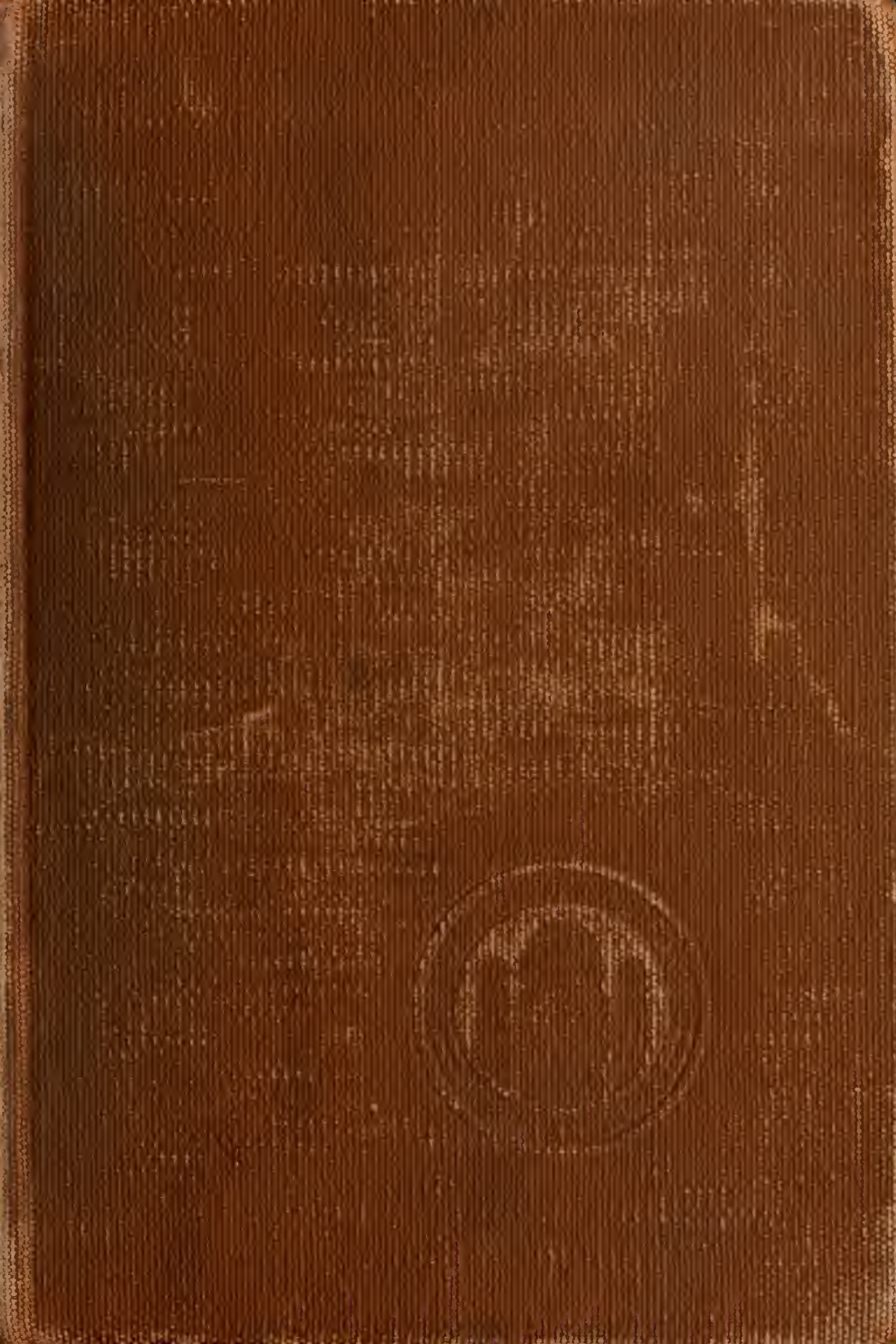
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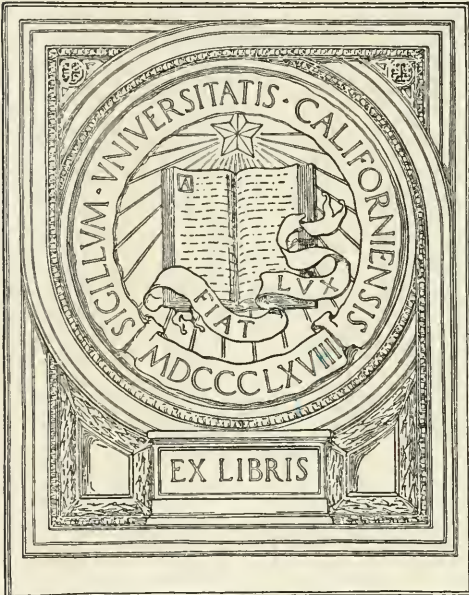


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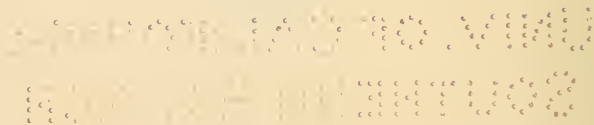


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LIFE OF VOLTAIRE.

CHAPTER I.

THE KING OF PRUSSIA'S SUPPER PARTY.

FREDERIC had gathered about him a number of peculiar characters during the eight years of his reign. At this period of his life he seemed two men in one, such a contrast was there between Frederic the head of the Prussian government, and Frederic the head of Prussian society. The chief of a state, indeed, *has* two kinds of duty, and needs to be two men, for it belongs to his office both to administer and to represent: like the master of a great house, who in the morning examines the accounts and views the leak in the roof, and in the evening receives company and beams at the head of his table. The Romans did not waste a man in having two consuls. Constitutional monarchs reign, but leave to ministers the nobler toil of ruling. The finished republic, perhaps, will reach this necessary division of labor in some suitable way.

Frederic both reigned and ruled. It was and is too much for one mortal; and if he acquitted himself of the double task better than any other man has done in Europe during recent centuries, most of his work was but for the day. Bonaparte demolished a good deal of it at Jena; Goethe and Schiller corrected more of it at Weimar. In his day, however, he was a victorious ruler, who redeemed, in some degree, the tarnished character of the royal houses, and kept the name of king from being entirely contemptible. At the moment when Voltaire arrived, to add to his court the *éclat* of the first literary name of the period, his position was singularly brilliant. He was thirty-eight years of age. He had had his first fight for Silesia, and issued from the strife with the province firmly his

own. His second fight for it — his Seven Years' War, for which he was always assiduously preparing — was still five years distant; and, meanwhile, he could expend time and revenue in making Berlin attractive and famous. The city then contained about ninety thousand inhabitants. It had its French theatre, its ballet, its Italian opera, its Academy; the king, with generous intent at least, striving to provide for his subjects the noblest pleasures which the wit and taste of man had yet devised.

In one particular this king was most fortunate. At a time when the best brains of Europe were impaired by the fumes of alcohol, his own father being a besotted toper, he inherited a constitution which, in the absence of hygienic knowledge, enabled and compelled him to be temperate. This was an immense advantage, for the greatest man has no brain to waste; and it kept him from fatal errors of judgment, such as his deep-drinking successors have committed. He had a command of his powers such as we see possessed by clean-brained men of to-day, who know how to live without injuring that best part of their capital which they carry under their hats. At times of trouble, when his brute of a father would have drowned his vexation or suspense in a quart of wine, Frederic would conquer the crisis by composing a hundred French verses. His habits and his methods were mostly those of a civilized being. The cardinal defect of his nature, his aversion to women, we cannot judge, because no competent authority has spoken the word that could explain it.

The tourists of that period kept Europe well advised as to his ways and pursuits. They described him as still retaining the elegance and vivacity of his early manhood; his deportment that of a German long resident in Paris, who spoke the German language only to his grooms, soldiers, and horses. His countenance became more German as he advanced in life; but at this period, as we see in the portraits, he was the European gentleman, with his chestnut hair in curls and a queue, and his kingly star on his breast. The hair weighed heavily upon the soul of man from the day when Louis XIV. adopted the mode of adding a cubit to his stature by a stupendous wig, down to the happy moment when the question was printed in a conspicuous periodical, *Why Shave?* In

1750 Europe had reached the curl-and-queue period, and it was accounted a virtue in this king that, on getting up at five in the morning, he put on a linen cloak and dressed his own hair. At seven he dressed for the day in a uniform of blue cloth and red facings, yellow waistcoat, cocked hat, and white feather, all renewed on a fixed day, three times a year. After a morning of work in his cabinet, upon the very stroke of eleven, he reviewed and relieved his guards, himself giving the word of command, scrutinizing closely every movement.—doing this duty, in fact, precisely as he wished it done at every post in his dominions. He dined at half past twelve, with ministers and ambassadors, sat one hour at table, and was very dainty in his desserts of fine fruit. He took no pleasure in the killing of birds and beasts, but promptly dismissed his father's costly retinue of huntsmen and dogs.

At five in the afternoon, his day's work done, he became the man of elegant leisure. He composed verses; he summoned his reader; he conversed with his friends, until, at seven, his evening concert was announced. It was commoner then than it is now for men of fortune to play upon musical instruments. Frederic, if we may believe men who had no interest in flattering him, played the flute well enough to take his part creditably in a band of professional musicians. He was flutist in his own band, which was long reckoned the best in Europe. His nightly concert was varied by a quintet of famous singers, a man, a woman, and three eunuchs, all with beautiful voices highly trained. At nine began to assemble that famous supper party of eccentrics, numbering, when all were present, as many as seventeen, but usually limited to ten. The meal was served at half past nine, and the company remained till midnight, when the king withdrew. The most bewitching tale, the most absorbing topic, could rarely detain this man of method from his bed for more than five minutes. It was because he was as sober at midnight as at dawn.

These supper companions of Frederic, several of whom were actors in the comedy of Voltaire's residence in Prussia, were an incongruous band indeed. First in rank must be placed Mauvertuis, the old friend, tutor, guest, of Madame du Châtelet, president of the Berlin Academy, a French mathematician of European name. He was now domesticated at Berlin, hav-

ing married there a lady belonging to the court of the queen-mother. Besides his mathematical knowledge, he possessed agreeable talents. He could play well on more than one musical instrument, had studied music, and could write verses, some of which are not yet forgotten. When he was in the northern regions, "flattening the earth," he had some passages of love with the maidens of those countries, and even brought two of them home to Paris. A little song written by him upon his fair Christine, whom he "lost in the snow," is wonderfully absurd, but it has been admired. He was looking for the lost damsel, with his eyes filled with tears, when he saw a place in the snow that seemed whiter and finer than the rest. "I ran thither; it was my Christine." In defending Newton he showed talent for satire, and wrote some pieces of that nature which were effective in their day. He had developed, in the course of his victorious career, a self-love that was inordinate, exacting, and sometimes vindictive. The words employed by Dr. Franklin in describing a very "unclubbable" member of the Philadelphia Junto remind us of Maupertuis: "Like most great mathematicians I have met with, he expected universal precision in everything said, or was forever denying or distinguishing upon trifles, to the disturbance of all conversation." Frederic speaks of him, in one of his letters, as "*fécond* in inquietudes." He valued him highly, however, assigned him a pension of twelve thousand francs a year, conferred much with him on the affairs of the Academy, and enjoyed his society at the suppers, where the presence of the master was a check upon the disagreeable egotisms of guests.

Some of the king's notes to the president of the Academy have the interest of good sense. In one of them, when objecting to Maupertuis's project of having a medal struck in the king's honor, he says, "To tell the truth, I do not love these metallic honors. It is rare that posterity confirms eulogies and the inscriptions upon medals. Let us do good without hope of recompense; let us fulfill our duty without ostentation; and our name will live among people of worth." Again, upon confirming one of Maupertuis's nominations, Frederic wrote this golden sentence:—

"Bad appointments to office are a threefold inconvenience: they are an injury to public business; they dishonor the

prince ; and they are a kind of robbery of those who deserve advancement."

Before the arrival of Voltaire, Maupertuis was the most distinguished, though not the most agreeable, of the king's evening circle. He could enliven that circle, when so disposed, with recollections of his early days at the old channel port of St. Malo, his five years of service as a French soldier, his residence in Holland and in England, and the hot warfare he had waged at Paris against the powerful majority who so long refused to accept the Newtonian astronomy. He was somewhat clumsy and ungainly in his person, never quite at ease in polite society, and disposed to avoid it. In the first days of his residence in Prussia, Voltaire remarked that "Maupertuis had become unsocial."

Another of the supper circle was the Marquis d'Argens, also a Frenchman and an author. The son of a lawyer and magistrate of Aix, he early recoiled from his father's profession, entered the French army, and ran away to Spain with an actress, whom he was saved from marrying at the last moment. He swallowed powdered glass with the intention to kill himself. An emetic relieved him, and his father administered the additional medicine of a *lettre de cachet*, which consigned him to a fortress for six months. A diplomatic appointment carried him to Algiers and to Constantinople, at both of which he had adventures of a harum-scarum nature. His father's patience being at length exhausted, the young man saw himself, at thirty-one years of age, without the means of subsistence. Literature, the last resort of many vagabonds, saved him also. He wrote romances for the Holland publishers, a vocation for which his own wild and wasteful life had been a long preparation. He wrote five novels in his first year: "The Memoirs of the Countess de Mirol," and others of similar titles. Then followed a series of "Jewish Letters," "Chinese Letters," and others, surcharged with that scorn of existing creeds and usages which was so general then. There was also the spice of scandal in these compositions which many people love. They were read with eager interest all over Europe, and caught the eye of Frederic, Prince Royal of Prussia. The prince invited the audacious and rollicking author to visit him. D'Argens gayly replied that he was five feet ten in stature,

not ill-made, and dared not venture within reach of a king who was apt to pick up any stroller of decent proportions for his tall brigade. On Frederic's accession, however, he entered his service, and soon became his most indispensable companion. Besides his gayety and talent, D'Argens had a fund of anecdote, gossip, and reminiscence. He knew the stage, also, from the point of view of the green-room, and he made extensive journeys in France for the purpose of picking up dramatic talent for the Berlin theatre. A few months before Voltaire's arrival, he had had the good sense to marry a worthy actress; which scandalized the Berlin world and made him happy. Frederic's correspondence with this sprightly adventurer is exceedingly voluminous, as he was the agent usually employed by the king in luring French artists and poets to the Prussian capital. It was he who captured Baculard d'Arnaud. He had to lament the reluctance of Frenchmen to leave Paris. "The fondness of French men of letters for Paris," he wrote, in 1747, "is so great, they are so content with the agreeable things they enjoy there, that it is difficult to induce even mediocre people to leave it." Such is the result of making cities delightful, as Frederic was striving to render Berlin.

Then there was La Mettrie, physician, author, materialist, atheist, and *bon garçon*, a fellow townsman of Maupertuis. The son of a rich merchant of St. Malo, he began by obeying his father in preparing himself diligently for the priesthood; he even became a Jansenist, and wrote a tract in defense of Jansenism, which was accepted by the sect as the true doctrine. Then he abandoned theology for medicine, threw himself upon the study thereof with zeal, and served at Fontenoy as surgeon to one of the French regiments. A familiar experience suddenly made him a materialist of the most pronounced type. During one of his campaigns he caught a bad fever, and, while recovering, he observed that the thinking faculty was impaired or improved in precise accordance with the condition of the animal machine. If the brain was diseased, the thoughts were distorted; if the brain was weak, the thoughts were feeble; if the brain was sound, the thoughts were rational; if the brain was stimulated, the thoughts were active. He concluded that man was a mere machine, the "soul" being only a product of the animal economy; and this

bold idea he promulgated in various treatises, the most noted of which was entitled "Man-Machine." At present, a jovial young doctor's opinions upon such matters do not excite consternation. But, in 1745, so much importance was attached to speculative opinions upon subjects beyond the reach of investigation that the chaplain of La Mettrie's regiment was able to get the merry surgeon dismissed from his post for presuming to interpret the universe after a theory of his own. La Mettrie then published a piece in which he held up to scorn and derision the medical practice of his time, sparing it no more than Molière had done in his comedies of the preceding century. He described the fashionable doctors of the day as charlatans, whose sole aim was to extract large fees from credulous patients by pompous humbug. He even indicated some of the most noted living practitioners by allusions to facts that were generally known of them. At last, as if only amused by the storm of abuse and obloquy which these audacities provoked, he dedicated his "Man-Machine" to the pious and orthodox Haller, professor of natural science at Göttingen; "a savant," said La Mettrie, "whom I have never seen, and whom fifty years have not delivered from all the prejudices of childhood."

The erudite and respectable Haller could not submit in silence to this extravagant jest. He publicly disavowed all sympathy with the atheist, whereupon La Mettrie published a burlesque romance, in which the austere Haller figured in scenes the most foreign to his habits and character: among others, as presiding at a supper of the "nymphs" who frequented the beer gardens of Göttingen. The professor deemed it his duty to give a serious and detailed reply to this folly, to the great amusement of idle readers.

Frederic, King of Prussia, a victim from his youth up of the austerities which La Mettrie ridiculed, cast a favorable eye upon him, and told Maupertuis to investigate and report upon him. Maupertuis reported: "I do not doubt that La Mettrie will give you perfect satisfaction, if your majesty can put the drag upon that impetuous imagination of his, which has hitherto carried him beyond the bounds of propriety and reasonable liberty. He reads well, relates agreeably, his mind being ready money. He will be very useful to your majesty."

This in 1748. Voltaire, in 1750, found him installed at Berlin, as reader, companion, familiar, of the king, pensioned and established, — a *bon diable*, who was “amusing for a few minutes, then a bore.” Endless anecdotes of him are recorded in the multitudinous gossip relating to this peculiar court. Soon after his arrival at Berlin, he was told, on passing a grocer’s shop, that it was the abode of a *materialist*, the name given by Germans to grocers. La Mettrie entered, asked to see the materialist, embraced him with transport, and congratulated him upon having reached such rational opinions as the name implied.

Another Frenchman of the king’s supper parties was a young officer, “the brave Major Chasot,” as Frederic himself styled him in a public bulletin. He had begun his military career in a favorite French regiment; but, having dangerously wounded an officer of powerful connections in a duel, he was obliged to flee across the border into Germany, where he was presented to Frederic, then Prince Royal. The prince, captivated by his agreeable qualities, adopted him into his familiar circle; so that, on the eventful day of Molwitz, King Frederic’s first battle, Chasot was riding close to the king at the moment when the battle seemed lost, and Frederic himself was about to be surrounded. The Austrian officer cried out to the royal staff, “The king, gentlemen, — where is the king?” Chasot spurred upon the Austrian, saying, “You ask for the king; here he is!” Chasot was instantly attacked, but fought so well that he kept the hostile party engaged for some minutes, during which the king escaped; and, just as he was about to sink under his many wounds, a company of Prussians rescued him. Frederic proclaimed him his saviour, and promoted him to the rank of major. Not the less did he sentence him to the fortress of Spandau for a year, when, some time after, he killed a Prussian bully in a duel. In a few weeks, however, the king pardoned him, and soon restored him to all his former favor. Chasot, too, was a flutist of the most persistent disposition, — one of those amateurs whose merciless practice drives their neighbors mad.

Darget, another of the king’s readers and associates, came to Prussia as *attaché* of the French ambassador, Valori, who used to accompany the king in his first campaigns. By a

curious coincidence, Darget saved his chief by a device similar to that by which Chasot saved his. A band of pandours having surprised M. de Valori's camp at break of day, Darget put on the ambassador's dressing-gown, assumed the ambassador, and was carried away as a great prize to the Austrian head-quarters. "Are you M. Valori?" asked the general. "No, monsieur, I am his secretary." "How did you dare to say you were M. de Valori?" asked the Austrian. "I dared," replied Darget, "because I ought." The incident pleased the king, and, Darget being promptly exchanged, he made him reader, secretary, companion, confidant.

Besides these native Frenchmen, there was an Irish Frenchman at Frederic's court. "Lord Tyreconnell," a refugee from the lost cause of James II. France had taken him into high favor, and he was now at Berlin in the character of French ambassador, one of the diplomatic corps whom Frederic favored. He gave great British dinners at the Prussian capital, too weighty for the imperfect digestion of an author; but Lady Tyreconnell "received" afterwards very agreeably, though there was a tendency, even then, to the barbaric crush. Frederic, not unwilling to displease his uncle, George II. of England, returned the compliment of Lord Tyreconnell's appointment by sending as his own ambassador to Paris George Keith, a Scotch Jacobite, a refugee from the lost cause of the Pretender. "It has the air of a joke," wrote Voltaire to his niece." He mentioned, also, by way of showing the freedom accorded by Frederic to his servants, that Lord-Marshal Keith took with him to Paris a pretty little Turkish girl, who, having been taken prisoner at the capture of a city, had been given to the Scotch volunteer as a present. "She is a good Mahometan," adds Voltaire. "Her master leaves her entire liberty of conscience. He has in his suite a kind of Tartar valet, who has the honor to be a pagan; for his own part, he is, I believe, an Anglican, or something near it. All this forms rather a pleasant mixture, which proves that people can live together, though not agreeing in opinion."

Was there, then, no German at this German monarch's table, to which other countries had contributed so many guests? It was related of another German prince of this period, who shared Frederic's taste for Frenchmen and his

contempt for Germans, that, one evening, a guest, looking up and down the table, remarked, "It is only the master who is not French!" This could not be said of Frederic's supper-table every evening. The king's brother and heir presumptive, Prince Henry, had a seat there, *ex officio*, when he could get leave from his regiment. Algarotti, too, who was still in Frederic's service, was an Italian. There was, also, one old reprobate from the late king's tobacco orgies, Baron Pollnitz, a Prussian, who had a rare collection of stories in his memory, and told them amusingly. Frederic tolerated him, and he served to justify the king's preference for the lighter and brighter sons of Gaul.

The child, however, was born who was destined to avenge and adorn a country so unknown to its king. The baby Goethe was a year old when Voltaire witnessed the Berlin carousal of August, 1750.

In such a circle as this, Voltaire would have easily taken the first place, even if he had not been the new-comer and the favorite. All but Maupertuis hailed him as a precious acquisition, for the business of being brilliantly agreeable to a master every evening, from nine to twelve, becomes monotonous. Voltaire, after forty years' practice in supping with "the great," knew the arts by which cloyed minds are entertained, — as an old dependent in a remote country house is familiar with all the possible games of the drawing-room. During the first weeks, too, he remained under the illusions of the honeymoon. All the world of Berlin paid court to him. He at once organized a dramatic company of princes, princesses, and courtiers, of which he was himself the director. "Rome Sauvée" was performed before the queens and their courts, Prince Henry taking a part in the play, and the author enacting his favorite Cicero once more, with great applause. Others of his severer tragedies followed, and, at last, the tender "Zaïre" drew tears from all eyes, the author assuming the aged Lusignan, Christian martyr. Racine's "Andromache" was presented in due time. Comedies were interspersed, and all the court circle agreed that the king had alleviated human life in Berlin by adding a Voltaire to his conquest of Silesia.

One of the anecdotes of this period is pleasing. A cadet in the military academy of Berlin, eleven years old, was extremely

desirous of witnessing Voltaire's little comedy of "Nanine," one of the performances of this illustrious company of comedians. He addressed a poetical note to the author and director : —

" Ne pouvant plus gourmander
Le désir ardent qui m'anime,
Daignez, seigneur, m'accorder
Un billet pour voir 'Nanine.' " ¹

To which Voltaire replied : —

" Qui sait si fort intéresser
Merite bien qu'on le previenne ;
Oui, parmi nous viens te placer,
Et nous ferons qu'on t'y retienne." ²

Another anecdote of the theatre is not quite so credible nor creditable. For "Rome Sauvée" they sent him a number of soldiers as supernumeraries, whose awkwardness disturbed very much the too sensitive performer who played Cicero. He cried out, at length, loud enough to be heard all over the house. "I asked for men, and they have sent me Germans!" at which the courtly audience is said to have laughed. Goethe was not born too soon, if this story is true, and Schiller might have made greater haste.

During these gay weeks and longer, Voltaire seems to have been at times completely fascinated. He thought that he had done a wise act in changing his abode. In Prussia, as he was well pleased to repeat, there was no ass of Mirepoix to be despised and feared: no Bull Unigenitus; no body of clergy and courtiers getting fat preferment by affecting zeal for that preposterous document; no *billets de confession*; no *lettres de cachet*; no Frérons earning bread and prestige by irritating the sensitive self-love of authors; no cabals of the parquette to damn a play; no sharp hail of epigrams whenever Piron was displeased. Nor was there a dull semblance of a king to give countenance and power to everything most hostile to the welfare and honor of France. During the first three months of his residence in Prussia, he was accustomed to write to his niece and his "guardian angels" in this strain : —

¹ Unable longer to curb the ardent desire which animates me, deign, my lord, to grant me a ticket to see "Nanine."

² One who knows how to interest so strongly deserves to have his wish gratified. Yes, come and place yourself among us, and we will try to keep you there.

[To D'Argental, September 1, 1750.] "I find a port after thirty years of storms. I find the protection of a king, the conversation of a philosopher, the agreeable qualities of an amiable man, all united in one who for sixteen years has wished to console me for my misfortunes, and put me in security against my enemies. Everything is to be feared for me in Paris as long as I live, notwithstanding my places and the goodness even of the king. Here, I am sure of a destiny forever tranquil. If one can be sure of anything, it is of the character of the King of Prussia. I was formerly much put out with him on account of a French officer, condemned cruelly by the king's father, whose pardon I had asked. I did not know that this favor had been accorded. The King of Prussia does very noble actions without notifying his people. He has just sent fifty thousand francs in a very pretty little casket to an old lady of the court, whom his father had condemned to a punishment entirely in the Turkish style. This ancient despotic wrong of the late king was spoken of again some time ago; he was unwilling either to show disrespect to the memory of his father or to allow the injustice to remain. He chose an estate of that lady as the scene of a sham-fight of ten thousand troops, — a kind of spectacle worthy of the conqueror of Austria. He pretended that during the exercises a hedge had been cut down on the land of the lady in question. Not a twig of it had been laid low; but he persisted in saying that damage had been done, and sent the fifty thousand francs to repair it. My dear and honored friend, how then are great men constituted, if this man is not one?"

[To his niece, Madame de Fontaine, September 23, 1750.] "He is as amiable as you are. He is a king, I grant; but it is a passion of sixteen years; he has turned my head. I have had the insolence to think that nature made me for him. I have found a conformity so singular between all his tastes and mine that I have forgotten he is sovereign of half Germany, while the other trembles at his name; that he has gained five battles; that he is the greatest general in Europe; that he is surrounded by big devils of heroes six feet high. . . . You other Parisians think that I am in Lapland; know that we have had a summer as warm as yours, that we have eaten good peaches and good muscat pears, and that for three or four degrees of the sun, more or less, you must not look down upon people."

[To the king, October 8th.] "I prostrate myself before your sceptre, your pen, your sword, your imagination, your justness of understanding, and your universality."

[To Madame Denis, October 13th.] "Here we are in retirement at Potsdam; a place inhabited, it is true, by men in mustache and grenadiers' caps, but, God be thanked, I see them not. I labor

peaceably in my rooms to the sound of the drum. I go no more to the king's dinners; there are too many generals and princes. I could not accustom myself to be always opposite a king, in ceremony, and to talk in public. I sup with him in a company not at all numerous. The supper is shorter, gayer, and more wholesome. I should die at the end of three months of chagrin and indigestion, if I were obliged to dine every day with the king in public."

[To D'Argental, October 15th.] "I am leading here at Potsdam the solitary and busy life which suits at once my health and my studies. From my working-room, I have only three steps to take to sup with a man full of spirit, grace, imagination, who is the bond of society, and who has no other misfortune than that of being a very great and powerful king. I enjoy the pleasure of being useful to him in his studies, and draw from them new strength to direct my own. It seems that nature made me expressly for him; in a word, all my hours are delicious. I have not found here the smallest prick of a thorn among my roses."

Such were his transports during the first weeks. The project of traveling in Italy was soon given up; perhaps, because, as the winter drew on, his health declined, and he could not face a long journey, much of which he had intended to perform on horseback. Wagnière intimates that the true reason why Voltaire lived and died without seeing Italy was his fear of the Inquisition, — a fear not groundless, while a Boyer was powerful at the court of France. Frederic, as Wagnière tells us, intended to send him to Rome as his *chargé d'affaires*, which would have made him safe in Italy. But this scheme was too long delayed, and so the author of the "Henriade" and of "Rome Sauvée" never stood upon the site of Cicero's forum, nor brought a twig of laurel from the tomb of Virgil.

CHAPTER II.

THE FIRST TIFF.

How enviable the lot of this company of bright spirits must have seemed to lookers-on in Europe! Each of them had his chosen, congenial task, which he appeared to be executing in circumstances more favorable than had ever before concurred. Much of their work was of an elevated and inspiring nature. The king was governing Prussia with all the wisdom and force that he possessed; he gave the best of himself and of his days to the service of his country, setting an example of plodding fidelity which corporal or prince could safely follow. He was recording his country's history, celebrating the valor of its heroes, and preparing it for that larger and grander future which it is perhaps soon to enter upon as a federation of republican states. Voltaire, with an eye ever upon France, was correcting his old works and composing new. Maupertuis, as we see in his correspondence with the king, was employed in directing the investigations of the Berlin Academy, and in making the results accessible in annual reports. D'Argens was always writing or compiling; the bold La Mettrie had usually some new work upon the anvil; and Darget was the king's intelligent, assiduous assistant.

All these busy laborers were freed from that primal, eldest curse of intellectual workmen, — the necessity of wasting vital force in earning their subsistence. Here, for once, the outward circumstances and the inward longings seemed to be in harmony; and, in truth, every advanced community might, with incalculable advantage to itself, set free its twenty or its forty most fruitful minds from the necessity of that cruel waste, if only it were possible to select them. Probably it is not possible.

The astute reader knows very well that these companions of a king could not long be a happy family. The nature of

things was against them. Sans-Souci proved to be a monastery without the austerities, the discipline, the routine, the learned ignorance, which render monastic life endurable.

The scenes of his reception being at an end, Voltaire soon recovered from his honey-moon illusions, to find that he had made a great mistake in abandoning Paris and the freedom of his own house. In three months he was so well convinced of this as to half confess it to his niece, and thus expose himself to a triumphant I-told-you-so from that positive lady. "The King of Prussia will be the death of you," she had predicted in August, 1750. November 6th of the same year he was in a mood to write that famous letter of *buts*, which, from its oddity, catches the eye of one who turns over the volume of his letters of this year: —

"They know, then, at Paris, my dear child, that we have played 'La Mort de César' at Potsdam; that Prince Henri is a good actor, has no accent, and is very amiable; and that there is such a thing as pleasure here? All that is true; *but!* — The king's suppers are delicious; we talk reason, wit, science; liberty reigns at the table; he is the soul of all that; no bad humor, no clouds, at least no storms. My life is free and occupied; *but — but!* Operas, comedies, carousals, suppers at Sans-Souci, parades, concerts, studies, lectures; *but — but!* The city of Berlin, spacious, much more airy than Paris, palaces, theatres, affable queens, charming princesses, maids of honor beautiful and well formed, the house of Lady Tyreonnell always full, and sometimes too full; *but — but!* My dear child, the weather begins to grow a little cool.

. . . . "Mauvertuis springs are not very easy; he takes my dimensions hardly with his quadrant. It is said that a little envy enters into his problems. In recompense, there is here too gay a man; it is La Mettrie. His ideas are fire-works always in the form of sky-rockets. His chatter is amusing for half a quarter of an hour, and mortally tiresome longer. He has just made, without knowing it, a bad book, printed at Potsdam, in which he proscribes virtue and remorse, eulogizes the vices, invites his reader to disorderly living, all without bad intention. There are in his work a thousand brilliant touches, and not half a page of reason; they are like flashes of lightning in the night. Some sensible people concluded to remonstrate with him upon the enormity of his moral lessons. He was simply astonished; he did not know what he had written; he will write the contrary tomorrow, if it is desired. God keep me from taking him for my doctor! He would give me corrosive sublimate instead of rhubarb, very inno-

cently, and then begin to laugh. This strange doctor is the king's reader, and the best of it is that he is at present reading to him the 'History of the Church.' He goes over hundreds of pages of it, and there are places where monarch and reader are ready to choke with laughing.

"Adieu, my dear child. So they want to play 'Rome Sauvée' at Paris? *But—but!* Adieux; I embrace you with all my heart."

What had happened, then? Several disagreeable things had happened or were beginning. Frederic II. was master in his own house; but the most submissive household finds methods of relieving the suppression of its will. Frederic was king; but Prince Henri was heir presumptive. The king doted upon Voltaire; what more natural than that the prince and the queens should make much of Baculard d'Arnaud, a "rising sun," like the prince himself? It was Baculard who caused the first shadow to fall upon the new-found Elysium. The head of that young man was by this time completely turned. The king's compliments, the sudden fortune, the equally sudden celebrity, the assiduous attentions of part of the court, had totally bewildered him, and he knew no longer what nor where he was. He was committing a series of incredible follies; and it is not from Voltaire alone that we learn this. For some years before leaving Paris he had been under the surveillance of the police. The report of the detective who was commissioned to keep an eye upon him contains this item:—

"March 20, 1750, the King of Prussia sent him two thousand francs for his journey [to Berlin]; but, having spent the money, he has been obliged to sell all his works to Durand for fifty louis, in order to be able to start."¹

The rest of his conduct, Voltaire assures us, was of a piece with this beginning. On arriving at Berlin by the coach, without attendant, he gave himself out for a "lord, who had lost upon the road his title-deeds of nobility, his poems, and the portraits of his mistresses, the whole wrapped up in a night-cap." Being an inveterate spender and borrower, he complained of the insufficiency of his pension, and of his not having been invited to the king's suppers; at the same time, he wrote to Paris that the queens "snatched him from one an-

¹ 2 Histoire de la Détention des Philosophes et des Gens de Lettres à la Bastille et à Vincennes. Par J. Delort. Page 151.

other." that he was tired of supping with them, that he often declined their invitations, and that he meant to use his favor in promoting the interests of artists and men of letters.

The ladies of the court had indeed paid him much attention. If the king had a poet, could not the queens have one? Moreover, as the police report describes him, he was "thirty-two; large, well-formed, blonde, and of an effeminate air." His boastful letters to Paris, therefore, were a not altogether unpardonable explosion of inflated vanity. But he did worse than boast of ladies' favor. He conceived an infuriate jealousy of Voltaire, his "father" and benefactor. It was Voltaire, he thought, who kept him from being invited to the king's suppers, and he allowed his pen and tongue unbridled license in descanting upon the character of the man to whom he owed his advancement. Before leaving France, D'Arnaud had written, for a Rouen edition of Voltaire's works in seven volumes, a preface of considerable extent, giving an interesting sketch of the author's life, for which Voltaire had supplied anecdotes, parts of letters, and morsels of verse. The performance having the usual fault of being excessively eulogistic, Voltaire had drawn his pen through some of the passages most open to this objection, and sent it thus amended to the publisher. Afterwards, he forbade its use, and the publisher composed a preface of his own, in which allusions were made to Voltaire's change of abode. These allusions were reported to D'Arnaud as being hostile to France, or disrespectful to its government, and such as might injure the reputed author of the preface and prevent his return to his native land. He leaped to the conclusion that Voltaire had himself inserted these offensive passages in the original preface: and, without waiting to ascertain the fact, he wrote to Fréron, disavowing them; to Fréron, "the worm engendered in the carcass of Desfontaines," conspicuously Voltaire's enemy, and the leader of the faction hostile to him! It was a clear case of going over to the enemy, and it was done at noonday, in the gaze of both armies. The D'Argentals were deeply moved, and the count dispatched to Voltaire a letter of burning indignation.

"I ask your pardon [he wrote] in advance, my dear friend, for the letter which I am about to write to you, in which I shall speak to you of Baculard d'Arnaud. It is a contemptible subject, very un-

interesting; and, down to the present moment, I have disdained to handle it. But this man has rendered himself famous after the fashion of Erostratus; he obliges me to break silence, and to reveal him to you completely. I had the worst opinion of him long ago. Besides regarding him as mediocre in talent and intellect, superior in falsehood, fatuity, and folly, I was aware that at the time when he was receiving favors from you he used to speak of you in an unworthy manner. Half from contempt for the man, half from pity for his poverty, I neglected to inform you of it. At length I learned, with the greatest surprise, that a very great king had deigned to invite him to his court. I could not help rejoicing at the chance which delivered you from him, and I took care not to advise you to oppose his going. I did not then foresee your own departure, and that, in removing yourself from the literary insects which swarm at Paris, you would find one at Berlin so much more dangerous from your being convinced of his attachment to you, which was your due for so many reasons. Since you have been in Prussia, there is no kind of impertinence which he has not written about you, and he has crowned his proceedings by a letter which is a tissue of calumny, baseness, and ingratitude. He has dared to write — to whom? To Fréron! He says that, after having made him compose a preface for the Rouen edition, you thought proper to add to it some passages so grave and of such great importance that he is neither able nor willing to adopt them, since he is a good Frenchman, and it is not his intention to expatriate himself, as you have done! This frightful calumny is one of the most stupid and maladroit, since it is refuted by the preface itself, which several persons have seen, and which others will still see. But you cannot imagine the noise which this tale has made. After having been spread abroad in the cafés and other tripods, it has forced its way into respectable houses. Fréron made a trophy of the letter of this wretch, and was going to give it full publicity. It is true that he has received a second letter, in which Baculard, touched with repentance and not with remorse, tells him not to show the first letter any more, and that the preface of the edition was the bookseller's own work."

This tells the story; which, however, Voltaire had already heard from other sources. The court was then at Potsdam, deep in private theatricals, to be given in the apartments of Prince Henri, who was fond of exercising his talent as an actor. D'Arnaud, always in favor with the prince, was cast in the same plays with Voltaire. Upon receiving this intelligence from Paris, he found it impossible to continue on rehearsing terms with the rising sun, and so informed

the king. "Can I," he wrote, "act at Prince Henri's with D'Arnaud, who overwhelms me with so much ingratitude and perfidy? It is impossible. But I am unwilling to cause the least *éclat*; believing rather that I ought to preserve in all this business a profound silence. It seems to me, sire, that if D'Arnaud, who is going to-day to Berlin in one of Prince Henri's carriages, should remain there to work, to attend the Academy, on any pretext, I should thereby be delivered from the extreme embarrassment in which I find myself. His absence would put an end to the bickerings without number which dishonor the palace of glory and the sweetest asylum of repose."

It so chanced that the king had a copy of the original preface in question, which he now read again, and he seems to have taken the behavior of D'Arnaud into consideration. He could not but discover that he had been hasty in inviting the young poet, and he perceived that if he meant to keep the peace in his house he must make a choice between a rising and a setting orb. D'Arnaud, as it seems, fancied the prince and the queens could protect him, and he asked his discharge from the king's service, perhaps not with the customary submission. The king replied by ordering him to leave Berlin within twenty-four hours.

Imagine all this done, as it were, in the presence of Europe: Paris very attentive; Piron, Fréron, Boyer, the D'Argentals, in agitation; all the cafés astir; Berlin excited; the queens in sympathy with their large, blonde, persecuted young poet: the court more deferential to Voltaire than before; and that personage somewhat dismayed at his own triumph. The rising sun was in eclipse; *but* might not the same fate befall a setting sun also? A breath hath made them, and a breath unmakes!

D'Arnaud withdrew to Dresden, where, as Frederic had many enemies, the young man found many friends, by whom he was still befooled. "I have here a whole people for my friends," he wrote from Dresden, "who take pleasure in avenging me of that scoundrel, V." But all things and men find their level in time. He soon wore out this extravagant welcome, and returned to France, where he lived to extreme old age, an industrious writer. Ten years later, he sent

one of his poems to Voltaire, with a letter, in which he resumed the tone of "an affectionate pupil," who "delighted to render homage to his master," and attributed his loss of that master's friendship to the "calumnies" of his enemies. Doubtless he was more foolish than base, and his abrupt dismissal seems as harsh as his sudden elevation was ill-judged. But such is personal government. His fate furnishes one more case in point to those who think that literature could not be really promoted by exempting persons who exercise it from the ordinary conditions.

The blonde, large Baculard was gone from the Elysium he had disturbed. Prince Henri remained, and it was he who again interrupted the peace of the elder poet. Wherever Voltaire went, he carried with him, and *meant* to keep under lock and key, "La Pucelle," to which he still added lines and cantos, and which he still read to ladies whom he wished particularly to oblige. He had read portions of it to the queen-mother and one of her daughters, the queen regarding it as a satire upon the Roman church. "I remember," he wrote afterwards to the Duchess of Saxe-Gotha, another friend of Jeanne, "reading that bagatelle to the queen-mother at Berlin, in the presence of the Princess Amelia, who was hidden in a corner, and lost not her share."¹ The king was so bewitched by the work that he wrote his "Palladium," a burlesque poem in six books, in weak but obvious imitation of it. Prince Henri had an extreme desire, not merely to read, but to possess a copy of "La Pucelle;" and, to that end consulted D'Arnaud, just before the abrupt departure of that young man for Dresden. Between them they corrupted an amanuensis whom Voltaire had picked up on his travels, and who now, for a few gold pieces, copied the poem for the prince, sitting up at night for the purpose. Voltaire discovered the infidelity, dismissed the copyist, complained to the prince, and explained to him the disagreeable consequences that would follow its publication. Prince Henri swore that the copy should never, never leave his possession. "It is only a prince's oath, I grant," the poet wrote to his niece; "but he is an honest man. In short, he is amiable; he has seduced me; I am weak; and I have left Jeanne in his possession. But if ever a mishap occurs, if a

¹ Voltaire à Ferney, page 142.

second copy is made, where shall I hide? The poem of 'La Pucelle' does not harmonize with my age and the 'Age of Louis XIV.'" For a while he was in alarm lest D'Arnaud should have carried off a copy to Dresden for publication, which would have been death to his dearest hopes; but the fear proved groundless. Every letter he wrote to Paris intimates revealed a longing to return. This very letter to his niece concludes thus: "Above all things, take care of our little theatre. I count always upon seeing it again. Ah, we have to live upon hope."

He was liable to mishaps of this nature from his precipitation in engaging copyists. Tinois, who played him the ill-turn with the prince, he had taken into his service for no other reason than that he could write a compliment in verse. Passing through Reims, he had occasion for another copy of his "Rome Sauvée," and employed Tinois to do the work. The copyist, who read the play before copying it, sent the author a stanza to the effect that, at last, four characters were completely revealed to a discriminating public: —

"Chacun reconnaitra, par les coups du pinceau,
César, Catilina, Cicéron, et Voltaire."¹

Pleased with the young man's *esprit*, he engaged him as factotum. Longchamp has told us what opportunities such a person had of abusing his trust.

Tinois was succeeded by a young Frenchman named Richier, a teacher of languages, resident in Berlin, who also proved something less than faithful, and involved Voltaire in a painful manner with the illustrious Lessing. At this time, Lessing, twenty-two years of age, was unknown, lived in a Berlin garret, and eked out his subsistence as best he could by translating, teaching, and copying. One of his few friends in Berlin was Richier, who in due time procured for him the keenly desired pleasure of an introduction to Voltaire, who received him with his wonted urbanity, and gave him some work in translating from the German. They became very good friends, young Lessing having for the veteran author the generous admiration which young men who have it in them to do something naturally cherish for men who have done something.

¹ Every one will recognize, by the strokes of the brush, Cæsar, Catiline, Cicero, and Voltaire.

From Richier he heard all about the wondrous "Age of Louis XIV.," upon which Voltaire was busy in 1750 and 1751, one volume of which, ready for the printer, lay among his papers as early as December, 1750. Lessing entreated Richier to lend him the precious volume to read, which Richier did, and Lessing took it home with him. It was a fault in both, only pardonable to their youth. Soon after, Lessing, leaving Berlin without intention to return, was so inconceivably thoughtless as to take the volume with him! On discovering the fact, can we wonder that Voltaire should have been equally alarmed and indignant? He was alarmed because he had already made arrangements for its publication, and naturally supposed that the copy could have been taken only for publication elsewhere, either in French or in German. He compelled his secretary to write to Lessing, demanding the immediate return of the manuscript. No answer arriving at the time expected, he wrote himself to Lessing a letter so polite and reasonable that it is difficult for us to understand how it could have left an ill impression.

"You have already been written to, monsieur, to pray you to return the copy which was taken from me and placed in your hands. I am aware that it could not be confided to a man less capable of misusing it, and more capable of translating it well. But as I have since much corrected the work, and as I have caused to be inserted more than forty leaves, you would do me considerable wrong to translate it in the state in which you have it. You would do me even a much greater one if you were to print the book in French; you would ruin M. de Francheville [king's printer at Berlin], who is a very worthy man and the publisher of this work. You feel that he would be obliged to make his complaint public, and to submit it to the magistrates of Saxony. Nothing could more injure you and more certainly close the door of fortune to you. I should be extremely afflicted if the least negligence on your part, in this matter, should reduce M. de Francheville to the cruel necessity of rendering his complaint public. . . . I shall be very well satisfied not only that you translate the book into German, but that you cause it to appear in Italian, as you proposed. I will send you the entire work, with all the additions and all the necessary explanations, and I will recompense with pleasure the good faith with which you will give me back what I again ask of you. Unfortunately, it is known at Berlin that it was my secretary, Richier, who committed this theft. I shall do what I can to avoid ruining the

guilty person, and I shall even pardon him on your making the restitution which I expect from you. Have the goodness to send me the parcel by post-wagon, and count upon my gratitude."

No sooner had this epistle been dispatched than the manuscript arrived, with a jocular note from Lessing to the secretary, apologizing for having taken it away. Few men who have even so much as copied a volume with the pen could think Lessing's jests well timed: "On leaving Berlin I had still four leaves to read. Put yourself in my place before pronouncing against me. Why is not M. de Voltaire like an ordinary compiler, whose works one can lay down at any place?" Voltaire dismissed the secretary; and Lessing, on hearing of it, wrote to Voltaire a letter of remonstrance in Latin, which has not been preserved. It is an instance of the force of prejudice that this affair, in which Voltaire was so clearly the party sinned against, is related by a German author as though he were the only party sinning.¹

Lessing could never forgive Voltaire for thinking him capable of making a base use of the borrowed volume. But what else could an author think who had been the prey of copyists and publishers for twice Lessing's life-time, and who could have known little of Lessing's honorable character from their short, unequal acquaintance?

¹ *Life and Works of G. E. Lessing*, from the German of Adolph Stahr. By E. P. Evans, vol. i., p. 106. Boston, 1866.

CHAPTER III.

VOLTAIRE VERSUS HIRSCH & SON.

THESE affairs were all extremely disagreeable, but they were of trifling importance compared with the prodigious and resounding scandal that now demands our notice, — the lawsuit between the author of the romantic “Zaïre” and a firm of Berlin jewelers, Israelites not without guile. This case supplied the supper-tables of Europe with an enlivening topic for many weeks, and compelled the King of Prussia to regret the hour that sealed his bargain with his new French tutor.

The suit would have been reckoned scandalous in Berlin without reference to its merits, merely because Abraham Hirsch was a Jew; for one point of agreement between Lutheran and Catholic was an abhorrence of the people whom Christians had conscientiously despoiled and degraded for fifteen centuries. The case is extremely difficult to elucidate, because of some of the most material points the evidence is either insufficient or contradictory; and hence the story has never been, and probably never will be, told twice alike.

Ninety-nine miles south of Berlin is agreeable Dresden, the capital of Saxony, then misgoverned by the Elector Augustus, son of “Augustus the physically strong.” This elector, taking a leaf from the book of John Law, had established a kind of bank in Dresden, and caused it to issue an inordinate quantity of notes, a million and a half of francs in nominal value. The currency of Saxony was inflated; for a time a note of one hundred thalers was worth but fifty. At the close of the Silesian war, during which Frederic of Prussia was sometimes master of Dresden, that king was in a position to impose terms of peace upon Augustus. An article of the treaty of Dresden required that Prussian subjects holding these depreciated bills should be paid in full, which proved a hard condition indeed for the elector. A piece of paper in a Saxon’s hands

was worth fifty thalers, and the same piece of paper held by a Prussian was worth one hundred! Speculative Prussians bought these notes in great numbers, and, on presenting them at the Dresden bank, received their nominal value. For three years Augustus was obliged to submit to this drain upon his resources; but in 1748, the King of Prussia, yielding to his remonstrances, prohibited the traffic, and forbade the importation of the notes into his dominions. Nothing is more probable, however, than that the speculation was still carried on in secret by Prussian subjects.

Voltaire, as we know, had been accustomed from his youth up to amuse himself by turning to his own advantage the financial straits of kings and ministers, and we also know that a propensity of this kind does not grow weaker with advancing age. Rich as he was, he still nursed his fortune, and not without reason. Events soon proved that there was no final refuge for him on earth but one which his own tact and force could make, supply, and defend. The very wages of his professional labor were a prey to every printer in Europe who chose to join in the scramble for them. But in speculating in these Dresden depreciated notes he committed the great error of forgetting for a moment where he was. He had left the land of royal mistresses and ministerial jobs. He was in a country where men usually told the truth, and where the government was an integer. He was in Prussia under Frederic II., not in France under Boyer, Pompadour, and Maurepas.

It was as early as November, 1750, when he had been in his new country little more than four months, that he cast his eye upon this luckless Dresden speculation, — one of his very few failures in an affair of business. He had been in the habit of hiring diamonds and other splendors from the jewelers Hirsch, father and son, for the theatricals in Prince Henri's rooms. The younger Hirsch sometimes brought the gems himself from Berlin to Potsdam, and, probably, stayed over night and carried them back the next day. Between them (though which proposed the scheme cannot be known) the poet and the jeweler appear to have arranged a speculation in Dresden paper; Voltaire to supply the capital, and young Hirsch to go to Dresden and buy the notes, then selling in Saxony at thirty-five per cent. discount. The pretext of

Hirsch's journey was to be a purchase of jewels and furs in the Saxon capital, where, indeed, both himself and his father had had business of that nature. This fine project was discussed and completely arranged in Voltaire's rooms in the royal palace at Potsdam, exactly over the king's own apartment, quite in the manner of Versailles.

Hirsch claims to have been the innocent victim of Voltaire's wiles. He says that he objected to the scheme on the ground that commerce of that nature might displease the king. "Upon which," continues the jeweler, "Voltaire protested that he was too prudent to undertake anything without the consent of his majesty; on the contrary, if I acquitted myself well of the commission, and procured him some notes at thirty-five per cent. discount, I could surely count upon his protection." The young man undertook the commission, and Voltaire supplied him with the requisite funds: a bill of exchange upon Paris for forty thousand francs; another upon a Berlin broker, named Ephraim, for four thousand crowns; a third, of four thousand four hundred crowns, upon the father of Hirsch, — the whole being of the value of about eighty-five thousand francs. As security, Hirsch deposited with Voltaire diamonds valued at eighteen thousand four hundred and thirty crowns.

Hirsch went back to Berlin, with these notes in his pocket. He lost time in Berlin, to Voltaire's extreme distress and disappointment. He lingered a whole week, and then started only at his principal's urgent desire. At Dresden he raised the money on his Paris bill, and proceeded to trade, as it seems, on his own account, deferring or evading the business upon which he was sent. He wrote unsatisfactory letters, to the effect that the price of the Dresden notes had risen in value, and could not be had at the seductive discount of thirty-five per cent. If he bought some for himself, he bought none for Voltaire, made no tolerable explanation, and, at length, Voltaire wrote to Paris, protesting his bill of exchange, and so informed the dilatory, speculative Hirsch. This decisive step brought the young man quickly back to Potsdam, where he assumed the injured merchant, and demanded compensation for time and labor, and, still more, for the great injury done to his credit in having sold a bill of exchange which

the drawer protested. He had been obliged to restore the money received for it at Dresden, and now held a worthless piece of paper; which, however, he took care to keep in his strong-box at Berlin. It might be of use, he seems to have thought, in extorting from his principal a liberal reward. The mere fact of Abraham Hirsch's holding a document of the kind, signed François Aronnet de Voltaire, was one which the king's friend would not care to have known.

Voltaire received him blandly, being by this time fully resolved to drop the speculation, and annihilate all trace and record of it. He agreed at once to compensate his agent for all losses, and, by way of bringing the business to a handsome conclusion which would close the mouths of Hirsch and son, he proposed to buy a part of the jewels left with him as security. He had worn some of them upon his chamberlain's cross; they had glittered upon his person when he played Cicero in "Rome Sauvée;" and, besides, he was a man who always had money to invest. A thoughtless world does not, perhaps, sufficiently sympathize with the embarrassment of rich people, who are always having quantities of money coming in which they know not what to do with. At Paris Voltaire would have known; but in Prussia, where he did not mean to stay very long, his money was a burden to him. They came to an amicable and, as both of them thought, a final agreement. Hirsch engaged to restore all the unused bills received from Voltaire, and to pay to him two hundred and eighty gold fredericks as the balance due after deducting the price of the diamonds. He expressly engaged to return the bill upon Paris, now valueless, except for purposes of mischief.

The jeweler went home to Berlin well content, promising to return in a day or two with his golden fredericks, when he hoped to receive the "liberal compensation" vaguely promised for his loss and labor. He came. But, alas, they failed to agree. During the interval, Voltaire had shown the diamonds to Ephraim, a Berlin competitor of Hirsch, from whom he derived the impression that they were egregiously overvalued. The "brave Major Chasot" had received them from an elderly duchess, and the brave major had sold them very cheap to Hirsch, who had now put them off upon Voltaire at an enormous profit. So said competitor Ephraim, and Voltaire be-

lieved him. When, therefore, the question of compensation came up for settlement, the difference was extreme between Hirsch's expectation and Voltaire's estimate. Hirsch expected at least two thousand francs; Voltaire offered something less than two hundred.

So far the case is sufficiently clear, though the evidence is fragmentary, slight, and inadequate. But, from this point onward, the acutest sifter of testimony cannot follow the details with certainty. Even Mr. Carlyle's fiery patience seems at fault. Clouds of smoke cover the battle-ground, the earth shakes, there is a deafening noise, the sun goes down upon the victor in possession of the field; but no man, by the most diligent questioning, can ascertain the vicissitudes of the long day. One thing is certain: Voltaire was *sure* the jeweler meant to extort excessive profit from him by keeping the Paris bill. Hirsch would not bring back the bill. He came, he went, he came again, he came often, but never brought it with him. We dimly see Voltaire trying to conciliate him by buying more jewels, as well as some articles of costly furniture. There were scenes, as Hirsch testifies, of infuriate French violence between them: the poet chasing the jeweler around the room, snatching a ring from his finger, shaking his fist in his face, and thrusting him out of the door. At last, after several fruitless interviews, finding him rising in his demands and deaf to all reasonable compromise, he brought suit against the dealer in diamonds, and had him arrested on a criminal charge. For a day or two Hirsch was in prison, from which he was released on bail, and the cause came to trial.

Voltaire's accusation, in effect, was this: "I *lent* a large sum of money to this young man; I lent it to facilitate *his* commerce at Dresden in furs and jewels. He refuses to settle with me according to written agreement. He keeps back a bill of exchange on Paris, and he greatly overvalues some diamonds which I took from him in part payment."

Hirsch replied in substance: "No, he *sent* me to Dresden to buy depreciated notes for *him*. The diamonds were not over-valued by me; but he has changed some of them, putting several small and inferior stones in place of my large and fine ones. I did not sign the statement produced by the plaintiff.

That is, I mean that he altered the papers that passed between us *after* I had signed them, so that their meaning was materially changed to his advantage."

The whole city was astir. The men who were jealous of Voltaire's favor, and those who regarded poets as Frederic's father had regarded them, encouraged and abetted the jeweler. In the midst of the sessions of the court they assisted him to compose an "Appeal to the Public," which contains his version of the story. According to this Appeal, the enraged poet was so determined not to submit to what he deemed imposition that he sought justice in irregular ways. He beguiled the junior partner into furnishing merchandise enough to make their account even, and then refused to pay for it.

"The Sieur Voltaire [he said] shut up the mirror [supplied by Hirsch & Son] in his chamber, and told me he would neither pay me for the rings nor the mirror, but that he would keep them to indemnify himself for the too hasty bargain which he pretended he had made with me before, although the brilliants for which he gave three thousand crowns had been valued by M. Reclam before the agreement was concluded. At the same time he forcibly took a ring from my finger in the palace. His servant, named Picard, was present. He afterward shut the door in my face, and bade me go and complain where I pleased.

"On the morrow Voltaire came with a lieutenant-colonel [Chasot] in the king's service, desired him to judge between us, and entreated him to bring me to his house. Scarcely had I entered, when Voltaire, in the presence of the lieutenant-colonel, pursued me about the chamber, seized me by the throat, calling me a knave, and told me I did not know the person with whom I had to do. He added that he had the power to throw me into a dungeon for the remainder of my life, but that his clemency would pardon my crimes, if I would take back the brilliants which I had sold him, and restore the three thousand crowns and all the writings that had passed between us. I replied that this could not be; and added that he would not have bought the brilliants if he had not found the purchase to his advantage, and the more especially as they had been valued previous to the purchase.

"Voltaire in his fury would have done me damage, and I left the chamber to go and lay my complaints before his majesty. Highly angry at the proceedings of Voltaire, the king sent me to the high chancellor, with orders to judge the cause with rigorous impartiality. I have already confronted the Sieur Voltaire at two sittings. His servant Picard has already on oath given him the lie relative to his

denial of having taken the ring by force. I summon him to produce the agreements that were made between us, and he affirms that he has no agreements, but that he entrusted the sum of eighteen thousand and thirty crowns to me without requiring the least security, — which is very like the act of Voltaire!

“He farther affirms that he gave me this sum to purchase diamonds and furs at Dresden, at the current price, and at the rate of thirty-five crowns each. I proved to him, by various notes and orders in his own handwriting, that everything I have advanced is truth, and he is daring enough to reply that these notes and orders were snatched up by me, after he had thrown them into the fire. I gave him a bill, which begins, ‘I have sold the following articles to Mr., etc.’ and he has rewritten all the lines, that the writing might resemble his, and has added, at the top of the bills, ‘for the payment of three thousand crowns stipulated by me.’ This laconic style was fitted to the small space which was left at the top of the bill, where he has erased the accent of the *e* from the word *taxé*, and has added *ables* to make the words *brillans taxables*. He could not act in like manner by the word *estimé*, because it was too near the words that follow. This contradiction, the style, the different color of the ink, the lame form of the letters, and the beginning of the phrase *J’ai vendu* by a capital *J* sufficiently attest his crime.

“I present the certificate which accompanied the diamonds that were sent to be valued by Reclam, and this he dares to disavow. He produces another valuation, which was made by five workmen, all of whom are persons who work only for Ephraim, and who have taxed the bill according to the orders given them by Ephraim. Just and respectable public, what ought my claims to be? To you I appeal. Forget for a moment the immortal works of the poet and the philosopher, and do you pronounce sentence.”

Thus wrote the jeweler. He presents in this paper all of his case except the charge that his antagonist had changed some of the diamonds, which was probably an after-thought. The cause came to final trial in February, 1751. German authors commend the judges who heard and decided it for their skill and thoroughness; and the king, as we know, refrained from interference. The court condemned the jeweler on every point charged or claimed by Voltaire. It decided, first of all, that the purpose for which the plaintiff had advanced the money was no part of the case; it was not the court’s business. Every man in Berlin knew that purpose;

for the speculation in Dresden paper was a thing which had been all too familiar for six years to the people of the Prussian capital. The court ordered Hirsch to restore the bill of exchange upon Paris. All the receipts and other papers appertaining to the cause were to be either destroyed or legally canceled. It was decided further that the diamonds in question should be valued by experienced jewelers on their oaths, and paid for at the price fixed by them. With regard to the charge that some of the jewels had been changed by Voltaire for stones of inferior value, that was ground for another suit, which Hirsch was at liberty to bring. Finally, as to the document said to have been altered by the plaintiff after its execution, the court made a twofold decision. It fined Hirsch ten thalers for denying that he had signed it; and it required Voltaire to make affidavit, in legal form, that he had not changed the wording of the paper, as charged.

This paper, rendered so famous by the trial, has since been reproduced in *fac simile*, both in Germany and in France.¹ Magnifying glasses of various powers have been brought to bear upon it. The *fac simile* affords the inquirer no help whatever. We see plainly enough the interlineations and alterations, which were evidently done after the paper was drawn; but who can prove to us that they were done after the paper was *signed*? Voltaire was the son of a skillful notary; he was himself one of the most adroit and successful men of business then living; his own very large and always increasing property was represented by paper and parchment; and, hence, if he committed this crime he knew better than most men its nature and its extent. The court was asked to believe that he had sat down at his desk in secrecy, and *deliberately* perpetrated the most bungling, artless, illiterate forgery conceivable, which converted the document into a tissue of absurd contradictions. A difference in the color of the ink has been observed in the original, which could not be transferred to a printed *fac simile*; but evidence of that nature has been justly excluded by the courts. Dip your pen into an ordinary inkstand to the usual depth, and you will have in your pen ink of a certain shade; but if you dip it to the muddy bottom, you are quite likely to have ink of another shade and

¹ See Voltaire et Frédéric, par Gustave Desnoiresterres, page 138.

quality. At this distance of time, we are justified in setting aside an accusation to which a Berlin court of justice allowed so little weight, when it had the parties, the witnesses, and the documents all before it.

Here the case might have been expected to end. Voltaire declared himself ready and eager to take the oath, and sent to the court a notice to that effect, with a request that the valuation of the jewels might be proceeded with. But now, as we gather from various indications, his friends interfered, and implored him to conclude the wretched business with all possible haste. The elder Hirsch, it was reported in Berlin, was mortally sick with anxiety and chagrin. Voltaire himself was worn down by ten weeks of intense agitation. The king was in a rage of disgust. The valuation would consume time. For these reasons he again offered to compromise the matter with the jeweler, who again saw his advantage, and still hungered for profit. After much obscure haggling, there appears to have been a kind of settlement between them, Voltaire consenting to a loss of about three thousand francs. Nevertheless, for unknown reasons, the affair lingered, or some fag end of it lingered, all through that year; for as late as December, 1751, there are allusions to it in Voltaire's letters to Darget, as if it were not yet quite settled.

Nor was the defendant disposed to silence, for he seems to have equaled Voltaire in the faculty of persistence. The elder Hirsch died about the time of the trial, and his son assured the public that the sick and feeble old man came to his death solely through the agitation caused by this affair. "Pardon, indulgent public," he exclaims, — "pardon expressions dictated by the affliction of an unhappy youth, who, in consequence of the cruel vengeance of Voltaire against the unfortunate son, has lately lost what was dearest to him in the whole world, a father who was tenderly beloved by his children, of whom he alone constituted the happiness! . . . My sudden imprisonment by the guards, contrived by Voltaire without the knowledge of the high chancellor, was as suddenly the death of this father." No, not *as* suddenly; nor was the arrest contrived without the knowledge of the high chancellor, Bismarck. The young man made the most of his father's death: "Will M. de Voltaire still continue so void of feeling as not to hear

the complaints and cries of several orphans, and to behold the tears, the mournful affliction, the desolation, the despair, of a whole family?" The jeweler and his advisers were abundant and not ineffective in their appeals to "a just and penetrating public."

Amid much outcry like this the plaintiff in the case tried to believe that he was a victor in the sorry contest. He gained his cause, indeed, but without recovering prestige; while his antagonist lost his cause, and gained his object. Many a worse man would have pacified the stout and resolute young jeweler by the sacrifice of several diamonds; but, as Marmon-
tel has told us, and as the reader has often seen, Voltaire had a constitutional persistence which made it all but impossible for him to purchase peace by submitting to what he deemed imposition.

CHAPTER IV.

THE KING OF PRUSSIA'S DISGUST.

OF all living men Frederic II. of Prussia was the one most profoundly disgusted with this affair. What could he say to those who had murmured at his extravagant favor to this foreign poet? What could he think now of his *fou*?

His first impulse was to order away the setting sun, as he had just ordered away the rising sun. "Write," said he to Darget, "that I wish him gone from my dominions in twenty-four hours." The secretary, well affected toward Voltaire, was extremely agitated, and did not write. The king repeated the order, and still Darget hesitated, as if waiting to see if the king really meant to adopt a measure so extreme. Then Frederic, a little calmed, asked him what he thought of the matter. "Sire," replied the secretary, "you invited him to your court. The cause is about to be tried. If he is adjudged guilty, there will still be time to send him away." The king was silent a moment, and then said, "You are right; you are a good fellow."¹

But he would not admit to his presence the plaintiff in the case of Voltaire *v.* Hirsch. During most of the first two months of the year 1751, while the affair was proceeding, Voltaire was in Berlin, an inmate of the royal palace, the king being much of the time at Potsdam, and there was no personal intercourse between them. The cause was adjudged February 18, 1751; but the king was not softened. He cared little for the merits of the case, and would not hear it spoken of. That Voltaire should have had *any* confidential transactions with a Jew would have sufficed to disgust him; for we see on many a page of Frederic's works that he accepted the division of a community into fixed ranks and classes as part of the essential order of nature. In his eyes, free as he was from

¹ Duverney, chapter xv.

some prejudices, a Jew was among the lowest of the low. A Jew's oath was not yet received in any Prussian court against a Christian's. But *such* a transaction! and after he had provided so bountifully for all Voltaire's possible needs! Thus the favorite, nominal victor as he was, remained "in the king's disgrace," and sat in the Berlin palace, miserably sick, melancholy, and ashamed; owing to himself, as erring mortals are apt to do, all the extent of his folly, when all the world saw it also.

In every trouble of his life he had one sure resource,—his work. He plodded on, he and his new secretary, with the "Age of Louis XIV.," and resolved to get out into the country on the opening of the spring, in some quiet house near Potsdam, where he could recover his health and pursue his vocation. But, first, he must appease the king. After the decision of the cause, he ventured upon writing a penitential letter:—

"Ah, yes, sire, your majesty is right; no one in the world could be more so; and, at my age, I am damaged almost past repair. I have never corrected myself of the cursed idea of always getting beforehand in all affairs; and, although well persuaded that there are a thousand occasions when it is necessary to submit to loss in silence, and although I have had experience of it, I had the rage to wish to prove myself in the right against a man with whom it is not permitted even to be in the right. Believe that I am in despair, and that I have never felt a grief so profound and so bitter. I have recklessly deprived myself of the only object for which I came here; I have lost the communings of spirit which enlightened and cheered me; I have displeased the only man whom I wish to please. If the Queen of Sheba had lost the favor of Solomon, she would not have suffered more than I."

To this letter the king does not appear to have replied. Voltaire sought the aid of the friendly Darget, through whom he asked the king's permission to retire to a country house near Potsdam, until the spring, when he wished to visit Paris, that he might put his business there into permanent order. He asked to be allowed to relinquish his Prussian pension, "in order to prove that the king himself was his only object;" not gain, not glory. Then he wrote a longer letter, in a firmer tone, recalling events of the last six months, such as the

theft of "La Pucelle" and the conduct of D'Arnaud, in which he had clearly not been the party offending. He denied the Dresden speculation. He said that he had been openly solicited by the Jew Hirsch to take some of the notes, as other men were taking them; but, on learning their nature, he had canceled his order, protested his bill of exchange, and forbidden the broker to buy one of them on his account; and, in fact, he had never had one in his possession. He mentioned the name of the Berlin lawyer whom he had consulted on the occasion, and gave November 24th as the day on which he had protested his Paris bill.

The king answered this letter, February 24, 1751. He dealt roundly with his poet, writing in a strain that contrasts strongly with the fond letters of their early friendship.

"I was very glad to receive you into my house; I esteemed your intellect, your talents, your knowledge; and I thought that a man of your age, tired of fencing with authors and exposing himself to the storm, had come here to seek refuge as in a tranquil haven. But, at first, in a sufficiently singular manner, you demanded of me not to take Fréron as my literary correspondent. I had the weakness or the complaisance to yield the point to you, although it was not for you to decide whom I should take into my service. D'Arnaud was guilty of wrongs against you, which a generous man would have pardoned; a vindictive man pursues those whom he hates. At length, although D'Arnaud had given me no offense, it was on your account that he left this place. . . . You have had the ugliest affair in the world with the Jew. You have caused a frightful turmoil throughout the whole city. The affair of the Saxon notes is so well known in Saxony, that grievous complaints have been forwarded to me concerning it. For my part, I kept the peace in my house until your arrival; and I notify you that if you have a passion to intrigue and cabal, you have come to the wrong man. I love pleasant and peaceable people, who do not put into their conduct the violent passions of tragedy. In case you can make up your mind to live like a philosopher, I shall be very glad to see you here; but if you abandon yourself to all the transports of your passions, and if you wish to be at odds with everybody, you will give me no pleasure by coming, and you can as well remain in Berlin."

This was severe, but it relieved the king's mind, and prepared the way for reconciliation. Voltaire replied at much length, successfully meeting some of the charges, but still appealing to the king's softer side.

"Sire, I entreat your majesty to substitute compassion for the favor which formerly enchanted me, and which determined me to pass at your feet the rest of my life. Although I have gained the suit, I have made another offer to that Jew to take back for two thousand crowns the diamonds which he sold me for three thousand, in order to be able to retire to the house which your majesty permits me to inhabit near Potsdam. . . . I shall sacrifice everything to enjoy repose near the sojourn which you render so celebrated by all that you do there. Deign to leave me the hope that I shall see your last productions."

The king was relenting, but still kept the tone of the offended master. He wrote February 28th:—

"If you wish to come here, you are at liberty to do so. At this place I hear no suit spoken of, not even yours. Since you have gained it, I congratulate you, and I am very glad that this ugly affair is finished. I hope you will have no more quarrels, either with the Old or with the New Testament; compromises of that sort are withering, and, with the talents of the first genius of France, you will not cover the stains which such conduct will, in the long run, imprint upon your reputation. A bookseller Gosse [Jore], a violinist of the opera, a Jew jeweler are indeed people whose names, in no kind of business, ought to be found by the side of yours. I write this letter with the rough good sense of a German, who says what he thinks, without employing equivocal terms and weak ameliorations which disfigure the truth."

To Potsdam he was not going at present, but to the marquisate, near that royal abode, where he had hired a house, for which he was buying horses and some furniture. He wrote once more to the king, not omitting further mention of the suit, which the king would not hear of at Potsdam:—

"Sire, all things maturely considered, I committed a grave fault in having a suit against a Jew, and I ask pardon of your majesty, of your philosophy, and of your goodness. I was piqued; I had a rage to prove that I had been deceived. I have proved it, and, after having gained this unfortunate suit, I have given to that cursed Hebrew more than I offered him at first to take back his cursed diamonds, which are not becoming to a man of letters. All that does not hinder that I consecrated my life to you. Do with me whatever you please. I

have written to her Royal Highness, the Margravine of Bayreuth, that Brother Voltaire was in penitence. Have pity upon Brother Voltaire. He is only waiting for the moment to come when he can go and bury himself in his cell at the marquisate. Believe, sire, that Brother Voltaire is a good-natured man; that he is on ill terms with no one; and, above all, that he takes the liberty of loving your majesty with all his heart. And to whom will you show the fruits of your beautiful genius, if not to your old admirer? . . . I learn that your majesty permits me to establish myself for this spring at the marquisate. I render you for it most humble thanks; you are the consolation of my life."

At this time the king was consoling himself for the troubles of a royal lot by working upon his long poem, "The Art of War." He could not willingly dispense with the aid of such a critic at such a time, after getting him with so much difficulty; and this consideration, probably, had its influence in softening Frederic toward his *maître*. His next letter was quite in the old, familiar manner, though not expressed with his usual happiness. The royal poet wished to notify his master that the six cantos of his "Art of War" were ready for submission to the evening tripod:—

"I am just delivered of six at a birth, who ask to be baptized in Apollo's name in the waters of Hippocrene. 'La Henriade' is requested to be their godmother. You will have the goodness to bring her this evening, at five o'clock, into the apartment of the father. Darget-Lucine will be there, and the imagination of the 'Man-Machine' will hold the new-born children at the font."

Thus an appearance of harmony was restored, and Voltaire, as health returned, resumed his place at the king's table and his labors upon the king's works. His own work was rarely discontinued for a day; and now he sought to forget the miseries of this winter in laboring with renewed ardor and entire absorption upon his history of Louis XIV. We must cast a glance upon his work in Prussia, much of which was highly important, and continues current and vital to the present time.

CHAPTER V.

WORK IN PRUSSIA.

AMONG his earliest labors in Prussia was the learning of a little German. He felt it becoming to apologize to his friends for so doing, the German language being held in contempt by the king and the court, who knew, indeed, very little of it. "I have worked," he wrote to De Thibouville, in October, 1750, "upon 'Rome Sauvée;' I have taken a fancy to turn the tragedy of 'Sémiramis' into an Italian opera; I have corrected almost all my works; and all this without reckoning *the time lost* in learning the little German which a man must have to be able to make his wants known on a journey, a thing very necessary at my age. You will think it very ridiculous, as I do myself, that, at the age of fifty-six, the author of 'La Henriade' should take it into his head to speak German to the tavern servants."

A month later, to D'Argental: "Tell me if German has spoiled my French, and if I grow rusty like [J. B.] Rousseau. Do not go so far astray as to believe that I am learning seriously the Teutonic language; I prudently limit myself to knowing so much of it as is needful in speaking to my servants and my horses. I am not of an age to enter into all the delicacies of that language, so soft and harmonious; but we must know how to make ourselves understood by a postilion. I promise to say sweet things to the postilions who shall take me to my angels." In truth, he acquired something more than this of the language in which Klopstock had just written a portion of his "Messiah," and which Goethe was learning to prattle at his mother's knee in Frankfort. He wrote letters in German, though they do not appear in his works. We have printed letters of his in English, in Spanish, in Italian, in Latin; but his German letters, if they have been preserved, remain in manuscript.¹

¹ 73 Œuvres de Voltaire, 241.

He entered soon upon the work of correcting the French writings of the king. He proved to be a zealous and vigilant tutor, who was proud of his pupil, and laid out an extensive scheme for his instruction, not content merely to correct errors. Here, again, he felt it necessary to explain to his Paris friends that he had nothing to do in Prussia for his twenty thousand francs of pension. He wished them to know that, if he was gentleman-in-ordinary to one king, chamberlain to another, and pensioned by both, he was, at the same time, a free and independent gentleman.

“I belong, then, at present [he wrote to Madame Denis, in October, 1750], to two masters. He who said that no man can serve two masters was assuredly quite right; so, not to contradict him, I serve none. I swear to you that I should take flight if I had to perform the duties of chamberlain, as in other courts. My function is to do nothing. I enjoy leisure. I give an hour a day to rounding off a little the works of the King of Prussia in prose and in verse; I am his grammarian, not his chamberlain. The rest of the day is my own. Happily, I brought here all my extracts relating to Louis XIV. I shall get from Leipsic the books I need, and I shall finish here the ‘Age of Louis XIV.,’ which, perhaps, I should never have finished at Paris. The stones of which I am raising this monument to the honor of my country would have served to crush me in France. One bold word would have seemed unbridled license; the most innocent things would have been interpreted with that charity which poisons everything. See what happened to Duclos after his ‘History of Louis XI.’ If he is my successor in historiography, as I hear, I advise him to write only when he has made a little journey beyond the borders of France, as I have.

“I am correcting, at present, the second edition which the King of Prussia is about to publish of the history of his country. An author in his position can say what he wishes without leaving his native land. He uses his right in all its extent. Imagine him, in order to seem more impartial, falling foul of his own grandfather with all his force. I have moderated the blows as much as I could. I like that grandfather a little, because he had a turn for magnificence, and left beautiful evidences of it. I had much trouble in getting the terms softened in which the grandson reproaches his ancestor for the vanity of having made himself a king,—a vanity from which his descendants derive advantages solid enough, and the title is not in the least disagreeable to them. At last I said to him, ‘He is your grandfather, not mine; do with him whatever you please;’ and I contented myself with lopping phrases. All this amuses and fills out the day. But, my dear child,

these days are passed far from you. I never write to you without regrets, without remorse, and without bitterness."

Upon referring to the work¹ under review, we find, indeed, that Frederic was not as docile on this subject as he invariably was upon points of rhetoric and prosody. The passage which Voltaire desired to soften remains severe. The dutiful king attributes his grandsire's ambition to something worse than vanity, — "to a certain perversity of self-love, which took pleasure in making others feel their inferiority."

Frederic's poem in honor of his army, "*Aux Prussiens*," for the correction of which he had particularly urged Voltaire's visit in 1750, came under the critic's view. It was written in a measure of Voltaire's own invention, of which he was fond to excess; but we see by his corrections, given in the last edition of the king's works, that he did not spare it. "Sire," he would say, on receiving a manuscript, "I am going to put on the gown and bands of the Abbé d'Olivet, and then I shall examine the exercise of my master." The remarks upon this poem, still preserved, in Voltaire's small hand, among the curiosities of Frederic's reign, are numerous and minute. The reader may be interested in a few specimens. The poem opens with this line, —

"Prussiens, que la valeur conduisit à la gloire."

[Comment.] "The hero here makes his *Prussiens* of two syllables, and afterwards, in another stanza, he accords them three syllables. A king is the master of his favors. Nevertheless, a little uniformity is necessary, and the *iens* usually make two syllables, as *liens*, *Silésiens*, *Autrichiens*, except the monosyllables, *rien*, *bien*, *chien*, and their compounds, *vairien*, *chrétien*, etc. Why not begin by *peuples*? This word *peuple* being repeated in the second stanza, *État* could be there substituted."

"Le soleil plus puissant du haut de sa carrière
Dispense constamment sa bénigne lumière,
Il dissout les glaçons des rigoureux hivers."

[Comment.] "All this is extremely fine, and the comparison is admirable for its grandeur and its fitness. The word *bénigne* is a little devout, and is not admitted into noble poetry, — two good reasons for effacing it from your writings. That is very easy to correct. *Durable* would perhaps be better, or else no epithet."

¹ Mémoires pour servir à l'Histoire de la Maison de Brandenbourg. 1 Œuvres de Frédéric, 102.

“ Héros, vos grands exploits élèvent cet empire,
Soutenez votre ouvrage, ou votre gloire expire ;
An comble parvenus il faut vous élever :
A ce superbe faite
Tout mortel qui s'arrête
Est prêt à reculer.”

[Comment.] “When one is at the top there is no such thing as getting higher, or else the simile is not just. When Boileau wrote,

‘ Au comble parvenus il vent que nous croissons,’

he meant it expressly to indicate an impossibility, and he said in continuation,

‘ Il vent en vieillissant que nous rajeunissons.’

One scarcely comes to a stand upon the *faîte*; in other words, this expression is equivocal, for it can signify that they have halted upon the summit, and then they cannot advance further. You could say something like this : —

‘ D'un vol toujours { égal }
Et monté près du faite, { rapide } il faut vous élever,
Tout mortel qui s'arrête,’ etc.

For the rest, this ode is one of your most beautiful works. I love this measure passionately. I believe I am the father of it, but you have embellished it. It would be a great pity if you should renounce poetry in the force of your genius and age, and after the astonishing progress you have made. I hope your majesty will continue sometimes to employ your leisure in these noble amusements.”

The king's longer and far more elaborate poem, upon the “Art of War,” addressed to his successors on the throne of Prussia, was subjected to similar criticism. All of Voltaire's emendations appear to have been adopted by the royal poet. I append two or three of his notes upon this work also. The poem opens thus : —

“ Vous qui tiendrez un jour, par le droit de naissance,
Le sceptre de nos rois, leur glaive et leur balance,
Pour défendre et juger ce florissant État,
Recevez le leçons d'un généreux soldat,
Qui nourri dans les camp par le dieu de la guerre ;
Va vous enseigner l'art de lancer son tonnerre.”

[Comment.] “*Juger* appears superfluous: the lessons of a soldier, the art of launching the thunder-bolt, do not teach a prince how to judge. *Généreux soldat*. Any epithet is here redundant, and that of generous, so suitable if any one else should speak of your majesty, does not seem allowable when you speak of yourself. *Le dieu de la*

guerre and *lancer le tonnerre* seem too vague, too common; there is, moreover, no art of hurling the thunder-bolt, and the thunder-bolt does not go well with arms, horses, and cannons. You could easily change this opening, which ought to be very correct, and should preserve in its exact correctness a majestic simplicity. Perhaps you could say something like this:—

‘ Vous, le sang des héros, vous, l’espoir de l’État,
Jeune prince, écoutez les leçons d’un soldat
Qui, formé dans les camps, nourri dans les alarmes,
Vous appelle à la gloire et vous instruit aux armes,’

or,

‘ Vous ouvre la carrière et vous appelle aux armes.’

Perhaps there would be still more vivacity and force in saying, —

‘ Apprenez des l’enfance à défendre l’État,
Et, noblement docile à la voix d’un soldat,
Marchez avec moi, prenez les armes,’ etc.

I believe that in finishing this exordium by *les armes*, and beginning the following period with *ces armes, ces chevaux*, the repetition would be happy, would connect the ideas, and give order to them.”

“ Sous les drapeaux de Mars Bellone vous eurôle,
Il faut que le fusil pose sur votre épaule,
Que votre corps dispos fasse les mouvements
Que l’exercice enseigne aux soldats commençants.”

[Comment.] “ As to the gun upon the shoulder, would it not be well to try to paint what is expressed here? The merit of poetry, and especially didactic poetry, does it not consist in saying common things in a peculiar manner? Could you not say that the shoulder, motionless and firm, carries the noble burden of the gun? It seems to me that it would be better to elevate in this manner by an epithet those first duties of the young soldier which you do not wish him to blush at.”

“ Bien loin qu’un soldat suive un aveugle courage,
Il faut qu’il soit dressé pour remplir son ouvrage;
Par ses faux mouvements, tardifs, prompts, inégaux,
On vit souvent manquer les projets des héros.”

[Comment.] “ We cannot say *remplir son ouvrage*. We say *remplir sa tâche, son devoir*. The word *dressé* is too trivial. I say again, the great secret, the only secret, is to ennoble those details. Something like this:—

‘ Ainsi, dans ces grand corps que la gloire conduit,
Que tout soit animé d’un courage docile;
La valeur qui s’égare est souvent inutile,
Des mouvements, trop prompts, trop lents, trop incertains,
Font tomber les lauriers qu’avaient cueillis vos mains.’”

The reader perceives from these samples that the king's *maître*, liberally compensated as he was, did something toward earning his salary. The emendation of the poem on the "Art of War," on this scale, must have cost no small labor. The tutor could say with truth, "I not only correct his works, but I compose for him in the margin a system of rhetoric, a prosody, which includes all my reflections upon the elegancies of our language, suggested by the little faults that I notice; only endeavoring to assist his genius, and to enable him at length to do without my pains. I made it a pleasure and a glory to cultivate his genius." The king, it seems, would sometimes purposely leave a word of doubtful propriety in his text to see what Voltaire would do with it. "We must leave him," wrote the king to Darget, "the pleasure of finding some fault."

Not that the *maître* denied his master the pleasure of receiving praise for his work. He criticised the king's poetry with strictness, but commended his prose too highly. His eulogy of Frederic's history of his own house would have been excessive if he had applied it to Thucydides. It was "a work unique," and one which, added to five victories and their consequences, stamped its author "the rarest of men," and "perhaps the greatest man that ever reigned." If he had but one favor to ask, it would be that Louis XV. of France should attentively read the chapters upon religion, and send to Prussia the ancient Bishop of Mirepoix. Frederic does indeed discourse with royal freedom upon this subject, speaking of the Roman Catholic church as "fruitful in plots and artifices;" a kingdom within a kingdom; hostile, of necessity, to the peace and harmony of nations. "The Pope has often been in opposition to sovereigns upon matters over which the church has no jurisdiction whatever."¹

Work of this nature was going on between them during much of the year. Frederic, in his turn, wrote comments upon productions of Voltaire; and, usually, when a composition of either was ready for criticism, there would be a formal reading of it in the evening, in the presence of the king, Voltaire, La Mettrie, Darget, Chasot, and others of the familiar circle. Occasionally Frederic would leave them for a rapid tour in Silesia or some other distant place; and it is evident enough from Vol-

¹ 1 Œuvres de Frédéric, 208.

taire's notes that the absence of the master was not felt by them to be an unmixed evil. They contrived to be exceedingly merry together, while Frederic, booted and spurred, was carrying the apprehension and inspiration of the general's eye from post to post, marshaling his kingdom for the renewal of the long, long struggle between the Catholic and Protestant powers.

Voltaire, meanwhile, grew more and more enamored of his "Age of Louis XIV.," a portion of which had already appeared. New motives urged him now to complete the work. He fondly thought that the history of a period to which most Frenchmen looked back with pride, and which Louis XV. and his family deemed the golden age of their house, would prepare the way for his honorable return to his native land, and enable him to pass there a tranquil old age, in spite of Boyer and his Philistines. The part executed in Prussia was a masterpiece of tact. He could not give all the repulsive truth of that foolish reign; but he told all of it which could then be of service, and nearly all of which he himself felt the iniquity. It was the work neither of a servile courtier nor of an angry exile, but of a citizen who loved his country, and desired to please and honor it. In the summer of 1751 we find him already proof-reading and arranging the details of publication. The work was printed in Berlin, in two volumes octavo, at his own expense, by the king's printer; but every noted book mart in Europe attempted to pirate a share of the profits. The proofs, as he afterwards learned, were regularly forwarded to Holland, where an edition of the work appeared before his own was ready.

The book had every kind of success, except the only one which the author personally coveted. The Boyers succeeded in getting it prohibited in France, and made the king believe that it contained matter unfit to be given to the public. Every one knew that Louis XIV. was secretly married to Madame de Maintenon, but Voltaire gave the names of the witnesses and the precise spot where the ceremony was performed. This was an indecorum. His statements, too, were called in question, and he did not mend the matter by assuring Europe, in a letter designed for publication, that "the late Cardinal de Fleury showed me the place where Louis XIV. married Madame de Maintenon." The work did not need official prohibi-

tion ; "it would have been read without it." It had, in fact, the most astonishing currency in France, and not less in other countries where the educated class depended upon the French language for their reading.

The efforts of the author to get his own authorized and correct editions spread abroad in advance of the incorrect piracies were lamentably futile. We have an amusing instance in his attempt to introduce copies into England through the good offices of his old friend, Sir Everard Falkener. In writing to Falkener he still used the English language, and, considering that twenty-three years had passed since he left England, he wrote it very well. The reader will be interested in following this negotiation for a moment in Voltaire's letters to his English friend : —

[July 27, 1751.] "DEAR SIR, — Fortune that hurries us to and fro in this transient world, attached you to a great prince, and carried me to the court of a great king. But, in these various tossings, my head will never prove giddy enough to forget your friendship. I hope you preserve some kindness for me, and I dare rely upon your good heart. I must tell you I have wrote a History of Louis the XIV. You may presume it is written with truth, and not without liberty or freedom. I have been obliged to print it in Berlin at my own expence. I presume four or five hundred copies could sell off well in your country ; the two things I have at heart, truth and liberty, being still dear to your countrymen, raise in me that expectation. I dare apply, my dear sir, to your kindness and friendship of old. You may perhaps recommend this business to some honest man, and even to a bookseller, who would be honest enough to merit your favour. I would direct the cargo to him, and he should take a reasonable salary for his trouble. If I can by your favour find any such man, I shall be most obliged to you. I hope you are a happy husband and a happy father, as you are a worthy Englishman."

[November 27, 1751.] "The printers at Berlin are not so careful and so diligent in working for me, as you are beneficent and ready to favour your friends. They have not yet finished their edition ; and I am afraid the winter season will not be convenient to direct to you, by the way of Hamburgh, the tedious lump of books I have threatened you with. However I shall make use of your kind benevolence towards your old friend, as soon as possible. I wish I could carry the *paquet* myself, and enjoy again the consolation to see you, to pay my respects to your family, and be the witness of your happiness."

[January 27, 1752.] "My *Louis XIV* is on the Elbe, about a month ago. I don't know whether the *grand* monarch has yet put to sea, to invade Great Britain. But booksellers are greater politicians than Lewis; and I think it is very likely they have got the start of me, by sending my book to London by the way of Rotterdam, while my bale of printed tales is on the Elbe; and so they will reap all the benefit of my labours, according to the noble way of the world. My book is prohibited amongst my dear countrymen, because I have spoken the truth: and the delays of cargoes, and the jarring of winds, hinder it from pursuing its journey to England. So, I have to fight with, or against the sea and earth and hell, for booksellers are the hell of writers. Be what it will, receive, my dear sir, my cargo of printed sheets, when wind and tide will permit. Do what you please with them; I am resigned. I had rather be read, than be sold: truth is above trade, and reputation above money!"

[March 27, 1752.] "My dear and beneficent friend, I send to you, by the way of Hamburgh, two enormous bales of the scribbling trade. I direct them to our envoy at Hamburgh, who will dispatch them to you, and put my wares to sea, instead of throwing them into the fire; which might be the case in France, or at Rome. My dear friend, I have recourse to your free and generous soul. Some french good patriots, who have read the book, raise a noble clamour against me, for having praised Marlborough and Eugène; and some good church-men damn me for having turned a little in to ridicule our *jansenisme* and *molinisme*. If our prejudiced people are fools, booksellers and printers or book-jobbers are rogues. I am like to be damned in France, and cheated by the Dutch; the old german honesty is gone. Booksellers of all regions are the same. I shall lose all the fruits of my labours and expences; but I rely on your kindness. You may cause some books to be bound, and choose an honest man, who will give them to the chief-readers of your nation. I entreat you to present His Royal Highness with one of these volumes, and to give some *exemplaires* or copies to those of your friends you will think fit. The bookseller you will choose may do what he pleases with the remainder, and sell them as best as he can, provided he sells them not before Easter; it is all I require of him."

He soon had the pleasure of hearing that Dodsley was publishing an edition of his work in London by subscription; he hastened to protest, urging the English publisher at least to defer his edition until he had been furnished with the author's latest corrections. New information came pouring in upon him, which he struggled to insert in new editions in advance

of the pirates. "Ministers of state," he wrote to Falkener in French, "who pitilessly refused to enlighten me when I formerly labored upon this work, made haste to send me information as soon as it appeared. The work, all formless as it was, has had so much vogue, and the subject of it is so interesting, that every one has wished to contribute toward perfecting it." In sending a copy of his new edition he resumes his correspondence with Falkener in English: —

[November 28, 1752.] "I hope, my dear and worthy friend, my worthy Englishman, you have received mylord Bolingbroke's vindication against priests, whom I have hated, hate, and I shall hate till doomsday. You will receive, my dear sir, in a very short time, an *exemplaire* of *Louis XIV's* new edition, more accurate and correct a great deal, more copious and curious. I desire you would be so kind as to answer two letters, I wrote to you long ago. Let me not be altogether in the dark about the good or bad success of my book in England. Two editions of it have been published this year in Europe, and two new ones are just now come out. But your approbation would flatter me more than all that eagerness of the book-mongers. Tully relied more on the testimony of Cato, than on the huzzaz of the multitude. If you have any news of my book's fate, let me know some thing of it after a whole year. If you have given the volumes to a bookseller, be so good as to tell me whether this bookseller has any thing to remit to me, or not."

[January 16, 1753.] "I have reaped benefit enough, since I have pleased you, and not displeased your nation. I return you my most tender thanks. I hope to come over myself, in order to print my true works, and to be buried in the land of freedom. I require no subscription; I desire no benefit. If my works are neatly printed, and cheaply sold, I am satisfied."

[February 1, 1754.] "I have wrote to you already, and sent my letter to sir Hanbury Williams, the british envoy at the court of Dresden. But I could not tell you enough about the desire I have to see England again before my death. I did inform you of my desire to print my works in London, without benefit, without subscription, and merely in order to give a true edition of the works of a Frenchman, who thinks like a Briton. I send this letter to Dresden. I must tell you, my dear sir, that I have taken the liberty to draw upon you for the 94 pounds. I return you again 94 thousand thanks."

Ninety-four pounds! But the wonder is that he could rescue even so much from the spoilers. The property of authors and

artists is precisely that which, above all other property, needs and must have the protection of international law. The proceeds of his history, upon which he had labored at intervals for a quarter of a century, were pounced upon by the publishers of Europe, as beggars rush for the handfuls of silver tossed to them for a scramble on a gala day in Rome. And, in the absence both of law and "courtesy" publishers must do so. We can still see by the catalogues that, besides the editions published at Berlin under the author's eye, copies were manufactured in great numbers at the Hague, Leipsic, Frankfort, Dresden, London, and Edinburgh, without reckoning the editions made wholly or partly within the walls of Paris. It is highly probable that the copy which D'Alembert read with rapture three times, in his modest lodgings over the glazier's shop, was at least bound in Paris.

The brilliant and sustained success of this history was infinitely agreeable to the author who had been deprived of his office of historiographer to the King of France, and severely dealt with by the King of Prussia. "I shall say to you boldly, my dear angel," he wrote to D'Argental, "that I am not astonished at the success of the 'Age of Louis XIV.' Men are naturally curious. This book interests their curiosity at every page. There is no great merit in writing such a work, but there is some happiness in choosing such a subject. It was my duty as historiographer; and you know that I never fulfilled the duty of my place until I no longer held it. It was absurd, their taking that place from me; as if a gold key from the King of Prussia hindered my pen from being consecrated to the king, my master. I am still gentleman-in-ordinary; why take away my place of historiographer?"

Why, indeed? The reader who will take the trouble to open the work at any part of it will not have to read very far before being able to answer this question. In the second chapter, for example, there are a few pages upon the relations of the papal government to other governments which must have been gall and wormwood to ultramontanes; so rational were they, so moderate, so adroitly and quietly effective.

Another important and famous work executed in Prussia was a poem in four cantos, which was first named "La Religion Naturelle," but, finally, "La Loi Naturelle." The object

of this poem was to show that the sense of right and wrong in human beings is innate, universal, and sufficient; conscience being as essential a part of our nature as the senses. It was an attempt to put into verse the view of man's nature and duty that prevailed at the supper-table of the King of Prussia, when the conversation took a serious tone; as though the king had turned to Voltaire and said, "Come, now, Voltaire, joking apart, what ought men of the world, men of sense and courage, men like ourselves, for example, who cannot be scared by a dismal chimera, or deceived by any flattering dream, — what ought *we* to think and do, amid this chaos of contradictory beliefs, claims, and usages?" This ingenious poem, a masterpiece of easy, limpid versification, equally nonchalant and precise, is Voltaire's answer to such a question. Here are a few of its points: —

"God has spoken, doubtless; but it is to the universe. He has never inhabited the deserts of Egypt; Delphos, Delos, Ammon, are no asylums of his. He does not hide himself in the caves of the Sibyls. The moral law, the same in every age, in every place, speaks to eternal ages in the name of that God. It is the law of Trajan, of Socrates, and it is yours. Of this changeless worship nature is the apostle. Good sense receives it, and the pangs of remorse, born of conscience, are its defenders."

"Never did a parricide, a calumniator, say calmly, in the bottom of his heart, 'How beautiful, how sweet it is to destroy innocence, to rend the bosom that gave me birth!'"

"The laws which we make, fragile, inconstant, works of a moment, differ everywhere. Jacob, among the Hebrews, could marry two sisters; David, without offense to decency and morals, could flatter the importunate tenderness of a hundred beauties; the Pope, in the Vatican, cannot possess one. . . . Usages, interests, modes of worship, laws, all differ. LET US BE JUST; it suffices; the rest is arbitrary."

"More than one good Catholic, on going out from the mass, rushing upon his neighbor for the honor of the faith, has cried to him, '*Die, impious wretch, or think like me!*' . . . Why is this? It is because man, enamored of degrading slavery, has made God in his own image. We have made him unjust, irascible, vain, jealous, a seducer, inconstant, barbarous, like ourselves."

"The very virtues of the pagans, it is said, are crimes. Pitiless rigor! Odious doctrines! . . . Are you not satisfied to condemn to the fire our best citizens, Montaigne and Montesquieu? Do you think

that Socrates and the just Aristides, Solon, the example and guide of the Greeks, Trajan, Marcus Aurelius, Titus, cherished and sacred names, whose works you have never read, are delivered over to the fury of the devils by the beneficent God whose image they were; and that you, acrid editor of a religious gazette, *you* will be crowned with light and surrounded in heaven with a choir of cherubim, for having, with a mendicant's wallet upon you, groveled for a while in ignorance and wallowed in the mire? Be saved yourself; I consent to that; but the immortal Newton, the learned Leibnitz, the wise Addison, and Locke, — friend, do not anticipate the judgments of heaven; respect such mortals as those; pardon their virtue. They have not damned you; why do you damn them?"

The poem concludes with a prayer to God, "so misconceived, though all things announce him:" "Hear my last words! If I have deceived myself, it is in seeking to know thy law. My heart may go astray, but it is full of thee. Without alarm I see eternity appear. I cannot think that a God who has brought me into being and shed so many blessings upon my life will torment me forever when my days are ended."

Before the work was finished, the author submitted it to the king, who, as it seems, assailed at once its least guarded position. If it be conceded that the sense of right and wrong is innate and universal, is it *sufficient*? That is the real question. Frederic's comments, which are not published, appear to have consisted of examples tending to show that it is not. "You frighten me," wrote the poet in reply; "I am much afraid, for the human race and for myself, that you are sadly in the right. It would be terrible, however, if there were no way of escape from your conclusions. Try, sire, not to be so right; for, really, when you are making of Potsdam a terrestrial paradise, this world is not absolutely a hell. Leave us a little illusion, I beg. Deign to aid me to deceive myself fairly. . . . The true object of this work is tolerance and to hold up your example. . . . I can well conceive that Alexander, appointed general of the Greeks, had no more scruples about killing Persians at Arbela than your majesty had in sending some impertinent Austrians to the other world. Alexander did his duty in killing Persians in war, but certainly he did not in assassinating his friend after supper."

The poet confessed the difficulty of defining virtue, but extricated himself by an ingenious compliment from the corner into which the king's comments had driven him: "You possess virtue; then virtue exists. Now, it was not religion that gave it to you; then you derive it from nature, as you do your rare understanding, which suffices for everything, and before which my soul prostrates itself."

When this poem was published, a year or two later, it found critics more severe than the King of Prussia; for it stirred the opposition of the whole orthodox world, both Catholic and Protestant. Pamphlets, parodies, treatises, volumes, appeared from the press against it; and of these as many as eight still linger in catalogues, and can occasionally be found. As usual, both parties in the controversy seem to have been very much in the right. Doubtless, the sense of right and wrong is part and parcel of us; but, also, there is need of a *something* by which this universal sense shall be gathered, clarified, strengthened, and brought to bear upon the consciences of men in whom the innate sense is weak or perverted.

A work destined to a far wider celebrity and influence than this poem was suggested at the King of Prussia's supper-table, and begun in Prussia. The ruling topic in literary circles during Voltaire's residence in Prussia was the Encyclopædia of Diderot and D'Alembert, the prospectus of which was published in 1750, the first volume in 1751, and the second in 1752. A glance at the Dictionary of Bayle, which this work superseded on the Continent, explains the enthusiasm with which it was welcomed. The editors not only had the advantage of following Bayle and Chambers, but, in 1750, they dared print what would have brought Bayle to a dungeon in 1696. Bayle could only hint and insinuate; but Diderot, though still obliged to use management and precaution, could handle delicate topics with far greater freedom, besides marshaling all the sciences against the enemies of truth. I need not here dwell upon this celebrated enterprise, to which we shall have to return ere long. From first to last, as we shall then see, Voltaire gave it his sympathy, his frequent coöperation, his fertile suggestions. In return, he derived from it the idea of his "Philosophical Dictionary," the most entertaining work of its magnitude in existence. It is Collini, an Italian secre-

tary and amanuensis of Voltaire, who tells us the little we know of its conception:—

“Every evening (at Potsdam) I was in the habit of reading to Voltaire, after he had gone to bed, some passages from Ariosto and Boccaccio. I performed my duty as reader with pleasure, because it gave me opportunities of hearing excellent observations, and of conversing with him on various subjects. September 28 [1752], he went to bed very much preoccupied. He told me that at the king’s supper-table they had amused themselves with the idea of a Philosophical Dictionary; that this idea had been adopted as a serious project; that the king’s men of letters and the king himself were going to work upon it in concert; and that some of the subjects to be treated were already assigned, such as Adam, Abraham, and others. I thought at first that this scheme was only an ingenious burlesque invented to enliven the supper-table; but Voltaire, eager and ardent in labor, began the very next day.”¹

He worked with such impetuosity that, in the course of a day or two, he sent to the king the draught of that extensive article upon Abraham which now figures in the second volume of the Dictionary. Never before and never since were erudition and badinage more happily blended than in this essay, which might amuse an archbishop if he read it without witnesses. Many worthy souls have been scandalized at seeing such a topic so lightly touched. But by whose fault was it that those venerable and majestic legends of the past were vulgarized into mere facts, oppressive and ridiculous? Not the “philosophers’.” Other pieces followed. All the disputed subjects were treated with the same freedom and good-humor. The scheme harmonized well with his disturbed and broken life at this period; and every industrious writer of forty years’ standing finds about him a great litter of odds and ends that can be worked up into small articles, if they happen to be wanted. The “Philosophical Dictionary” was Voltaire’s commonplace book, which, being once begun, filled rapidly.

Add to these serious labors many trifles in verse, impromptus, compliments, epigrams, in which Voltaire excelled all poets. Every leading personage of the court, except the queen-regnant, called forth one or more of these. Those ad-

¹ Mon Séjour auprès de Voltaire, par C. A. Collini. Paris. 1807. Page 32.

dressed to the king have the great fault of excessive flattery. It is difficult for us, living where and when we do, to conceive how a man of Frederic's force and intelligence could have endured such adulation, even while laughing at it. Probably the ingenuity of the ideas and the grace of the versification atoned for the enormity of the compliment. In one of these little poems to the king, he tells him that the fire brought down by Prometheus to the earth is almost extinguished even in France, and adds, "With us there are merely sparks of it; with you a conflagration." The king had been denying, one evening, with much earnestness, the doctrine of immortality. Voltaire put into an eight-line stanza this idea: "Every preacher fails sometimes to live up to his sermon; you do, also, great king; on the high-road to immortality you preach to us that the soul is mortal."

Of the many notable things said by him at the king's table, scarcely any have been preserved, although several chroniclers extol their happiness and brilliancy. Wagnière relates an anecdote of Voltaire's journey among the German states, when he was accompanied by Major Chasot. As they were passing through a village, an album was presented to the poet for his autograph. On opening it he found that the last writer had inserted the familiar verse, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" He wrote underneath, —

"The big Prussian battalions. VOLTAIRE."

CHAPTER VI.

THE RIND OF AN ORANGE.

ADMIRING friends in France did not view the case of Voltaire *v.* Hirsch in the light in which Frederic II. of Prussia regarded it. When the particulars reached Paris, the plaintiff's nieces, the D'Argentals, Richelieu, Thieriot, and others of the intimate circle looked for the speedy return of the deserter. We have seen that the deserter himself had entertained the thought of slipping away on pretense of arranging his affairs in Paris. He came not. The summer was passing, and circumstances favored his return. Richelieu assured him that the government of France would not take his coming home amiss; which was proved by its allowing his tragedy of "Mahomet" to be again represented at the national theatre. Madame Denis joined her vehement and reiterated entreaties, ever returning to her original prediction that the King of Prussia would be the death of him. But he came not. August 6, 1751, guardian angel D'Argental took up the task of persuasion, and wrote him a letter so warm, so urgent, so reasonable, so honorable to both, that I am tempted to give it entire.

"I have nothing to add, my dear friend [he began], to what M. de Richelieu and Madame Denis are in the habit of writing to you. They have exhausted the subject; I could only repeat what they have said, and I should weaken it, since I could not present it with so much grace and eloquence. But I cannot refuse myself the satisfaction of speaking to you freely for the first time.

"You know how much your departure afflicted me. Your resolution to leave this country reduced me to despair; I was touched and piqued to the last degree. But the pique has not lasted; the grief alone remains. I did not doubt that you would repent; you have repented. You have felt in all its extent the grief of having forsaken the most lovable of countries, the most pleasing society, and the most affectionate friends. The king for whom you have abandoned everything could not recompense you for so many sacrifices. No one

renders more justice than I do to his great and excellent qualities; but we do not despoil the lion of his skin; it is necessary to pay tribute to the human being, and still more to his royalty. Love levels all distinctions; friendship wishes a little equality of conditions. It is only good to live with those to whom we can say what we think, and whom we dare contradict sometimes.

“I do not speak to you of what you have experienced in the affair of D’Arnaud, the lawsuit, etc. I should reproach myself for recalling to you doleful recollections, affairs which you have felt but too keenly, and which are still present to your mind. The king, despite his wrongs toward you, is still the only consolation which you can find in the country where you now are. You are surrounded by enemies, by the envious, by schemers. They compete for and snatch a favor, a confidence, which no one truly possesses. The king is a coquette, who, in order to keep several lovers, renders none of them happy. That stormy court is nevertheless the only place where you could live; outside of that, there is not a single being who deserves to be spoken to by you. You depend upon the caprices of a single man, and that man is a king. In a word, you have fled from enemies whom at least you did not see, to find others with whom you live continually. You sought liberty, and you subjected yourself to the greatest constraint. You thought to put yourself beyond the reach of envy, and you have only placed yourself nearer the envious, and exposed yourself to their attacks.

“I must own, nevertheless, that your absence, though productive of so many evils, has had one good result: people here feel the loss they have sustained. You are sincerely regretted here. Your return is vividly desired; but you must seize this moment, and not risk losing favorable dispositions by delaying to profit by them. You are too superior a person to be willing, from false pride, to persist in a mistake. You know so well how to correct your works; it is much more essential to correct your conduct. You have committed a great fault; you cannot repair it too soon.

“What has been obtained for you with regard to ‘Mahomet’ ought to prove to you that there is here no more heat and animosity against you, and that you have in M. de Richelieu a friend who serves you in a manner the most zealous, the most essential, of whom hitherto you have not made use enough. The success of ‘Mahomet,’ which is not doubtful, will augment still more the desire to see you again, and will prepare the way for your reception. ‘Rome Sauvée’ will surely prove your best work. It is impossible to produce it without you. The piece requires a perfection of representation which you will not even perceive until you are actually present upon the scene; and the

actors cannot play it well without your instruction. You will render the good actors excellent and the mediocre enduring. It is certain that upon reflection we shall never undertake, in your absence, to produce a work the success of which, without your assistance, is uncertain. Its success is assured if you are present, and when you shall have rendered the piece worthy of yourself and the actors worthy of the piece.

“Your glory, your happiness, are involved in your return. Absorbed entirely in your interest, I do not speak of mine; if you deign to regard my feelings, you will know that it rests with you either to overwhelm me with grief or fill me with joy. Madame d’Argental shares my sentiments.

“The coadjutor (the Abbé Chauvelin), Choiseul, and others expect you with the most lively and the most affectionate impatience. You will be received with open arms; and if you are moved by friendship (as I cannot doubt) you will experience the most exquisite pleasure which it can procure.”

To these urgent letters he returned answer, in substance: “Yes, I am coming; but for the next six months I am so involved in unfinished work that I must remain here.” It was his last chance of a happy return to his native city, though he was far from suspecting it.

He was spending the summer of 1751 very agreeably and prosperously after the winter storms. His health had improved as the season advanced, owing, as he thought, to his abandoning remedies and trusting to good living. He told his niece, Madame de Fontaine, whose “stomach was made upon the model of his own,” that, after having tried cold waters and warm waters, all the regimens and all the doctors, he had taken to the system of dining, supping, and even breakfasting, and found himself a new man. “I have lived six consecutive months with my king, eating like a devil, and taking, like him, a little powdered rhubarb every other day. Imagine an admirable château, the master of which leaves me entire liberty, beautiful gardens, good cheer, a little employment, society, and delicious suppers with a philosopher-king, who forgets his five victories and his grandeur.” He was very fully employed in reading the proofs of his “Louis XIV.,” correcting the king’s poems, retouching his own, and preparing his last tragedies for the Paris stage. All the old cordiality seemed restored between the king and himself. Such notes as this passed be-

tween them, as Voltaire labored in one room of the château and the king in another : —

“ Oh, *mon Dieu*, sire, how do you do it, then? In eight days I have patched a hundred and fifty verses of ‘Rome Sauvée,’ and your majesty has composed four or five hundred. I am exhausted, and you are fresh; I struggle like a man possessed, and you are as tranquil as one of the elect. I invoke the genius, and he comes to you. You labor as you govern, as the gods are said to move the world, without effort. I have a little secretary, as big as a thumb, who is sick from copying two acts at a sitting. Will your majesty permit the diligent, indefatigable Vigne to copy the rest for you? I ask as a favor that your majesty will read my ‘Rome Sauvée.’ Your glory is interested in not allowing to issue from Potsdam any works but such as are worthy of the Mars-Apollo who consecrates this retreat to posterity. Sire, you and I, with all due respect (pardon the *you and I*), must produce nothing which is not good, or we must die in the attempt. I shall not send ‘Rome’ to my virtuoso of a niece until Mars-Apollo is content with it. I place myself at his feet.”

Several notes of similar tenor passed, though they were separated only by a ceiling and a floor. They toiled this summer like two editors struggling to produce “good numbers,” each attended by secretaries, who also, as Voltaire intimates, were kept busy enough. Harmony prevailed at Potsdam. Voltaire lived upon cordial terms with the king’s Potsdam familiars, La Mettrie, Darget, D’Argens, and others; Maupertuis remaining usually at Berlin in his own house, or making a summer visit to his native St. Malo on the Channel shore. La Mettrie, in particular, often visited Voltaire at this time, and it was through his indiscretion that a cloud came over this peaceful scene, never to be dispelled. The plump and careless La Mettrie, “wise in his profession,” said Voltaire, “but a little foolish in everything else,” was far from being the happy man he seemed. Like Voltaire, he was mortally homesick, as Frenchmen generally are when they are away from home; and he was exiled for opinion’s sake. “He burns to return to France,” wrote Voltaire. “This man, so gay, who is supposed to laugh at everything, sometimes cries like a child, because he is here.” He implored Voltaire to use his influence with the Duke de Richelieu in his favor, that the decree condemning him and his book might be revoked.

Thus a confidential familiarity was established between the two men, and, one day, in the last week of August, 1751, La Mettrie gave Voltaire a piece of information that stunned him.

“ I am going to astonish you [wrote Voltaire to Madame Denis, September 2d]. This La Mettrie is a man of no influence, who talks familiarly with the king after the reading. He speaks to me in confidence; he has sworn to me that, in talking to the king, some days ago, of my supposed favor, and of the little jealousy which it excites, the king replied to him, —

“ *‘ I shall have need of him for another year at the most; we squeeze an orange and throw away the rind.’*

“ I forced myself to repeat these sweet words; I redoubled my questions; he has redoubled his oaths. Will you believe him? Ought I to believe him? Is that possible? What! After sixteen years of bounties, of offers, of promises; after the letter which he wished you should keep as an inviolable pledge of his word? And again, at what a time does he say this? At a time when I am sacrificing all to serve him; when I am not only correcting his works, but writing in the margin a system of rhetoric, a prosody, composed of all the reflections which I make upon the proprieties of our language, occasioned by the trifling faults which I remark, — seeking only to aid his genius, to enlighten it, and to put it into a condition to do without my pains.

“ Assuredly, I considered it a pleasure and a glory to cultivate his genius; all contributed to my illusion. A king who has gained battles and provinces; a king of the north who composes verses in our language; a king, too, whom I did not seek, and who told me that he loved me! Why should he have made me such advances? I am lost in wonder! I understand nothing of it. I have done all that I could not to believe La Mettrie.

“ But still, I don’t know. In reading over his verses, I came upon an epistle to a painter, named Pesne, who belongs to him; these are the first lines: —

‘ Quel spectacle étonnant vient de frapper mes yeux!
Cher Pesne, ton pinceau te place au rang des dieux.’¹

“ This Pesne is a man whom he does not regard. Nevertheless, he is *the dear Pesne*; he is *a god*. Perhaps, in all that he has written, his intellect aloof impels him, and the heart is far away. Perhaps all

¹ What an astonishing spectacle has just struck my eyes! Dear Pesne, your brush places you in the rank of the gods.

those letters in which he lavishes upon me such vivid and affecting compliments mean nothing at all.

“These are terrible weapons which I am giving you against me. I shall be justly condemned for having yielded to so many caresses. You will take me for M. Jourdain, who said, ‘Can I refuse anything to a lord of the court, who calls me his dear friend?’ But I shall reply to you, He is an amiable king.

“You easily imagine what reflections, what returns to the subject, what embarrassment, and, so to speak, what chagrin the avowal of La Mettrie has caused. You will say to me, Leave at once! But, for my part, I cannot say, Let us start. When one has begun something, it is necessary to finish it; and I have two editions upon my hands, and engagements for months to come. I am under pressure on all sides. What am I to do? To ignore that La Mettrie has spoken to me, to confide it only to you, to forget all, and to wait! You will be my sure consolation. I shall not say of *you*, ‘She has deceived me in swearing that she loved me.’ Though you were a queen, you would be sincere. Tell me, I pray you, and at length, all that you think of this by the first courier dispatched to Lord Tyrconnel.”

The reader does not need to be informed what Madame Denis thought of La Mettrie’s story. She thought what she had always thought, that the King of Prussia would be the death of her uncle, unless he could make a timely escape. She sent him word, also, that “Mahomet” had been reproduced in Paris with all the success which an author could desire. He returned again and again to his orange peel.

[October 29, 1751.] “I brood continually over the rind of the orange. I try to believe nothing of it; but I am afraid of being like cuckolds, who force themselves to think that their wives are very faithful. At the bottom of their hearts the poor men feel something that notifies them of their disaster.

“What I am sure of is that my gracious master has honored me with some marks of his teeth in the Memoirs which he has written of his reign since 1740. There are in his poems some epigrams against the emperor and against the King of Poland. Very well; that a king should make epigrams against kings may be an affair of ministers, but he ought not to hail upon the parsley.

“Consider, too, that his majesty, in his merry tales, has assailed his secretary, Darget, with a number of cutting reflections, with which the secretary is very much scandalized. He makes him play a ridicu-

¹ Molière. *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, act iii. scene 3.

lous part in his poem of the 'Palladium,' and the poem is printed, though in truth there are few copies of it.

"What do you wish me to say to you? If it is true that the great love the little whom they laugh at, I must console myself; but, also, if they laugh and do not love, what am I to do? Laugh at *them* in my turn, all sweetly, and leave them in the same way. I must have a little time to withdraw the funds which I have brought into this country. That time will be consecrated to patience and to labor; the rest of my life shall be yours.

"I am very glad of the return of brother *Isaac* (D'Argens). He was at first a little out of tune, but he has regained the tone of the orchestra. I have made it up with *Algarotti*. We live together like brothers; they come into my chamber, which I seldom leave; from there we go to sup with the king, and sometimes gayly enough. The man who fell from the top of a steeple, and who, finding himself softly cushioned in the air, said, 'Good, provided it lasts,' resembled me not a little. Good-night, my dearest plenipotentiary; I have a great desire to fall at Paris into my house."

He was "sure" that the king had spoken ill of him in his work upon the history of his own reign. If the king did so, he must have erased the passage. In the work as published, *Frederic* assigns to the poet *Voltaire* a rank above *Homer*, and to *Voltaire* the "philosopher" an equality with *Locke*, *Bayle*, *Fontenelle*, *Hobbes*, *Shaftsbury*, *Collins*, and *Bolingbroke*. "These great men," remarks the king, "and their disciples gave a mortal stroke to religion. Men began to examine what they had stupidly adored. Reason overthrew superstition; disgust was felt for the fables which had been believed; the blasphemies to which men had been piously attached were held in horror; and deism, the simple worship of the Supreme Being, made a number of converts. With that reasonable religion tolerance was established, and people were no longer enemies because they differed in opinion." This was pure *Voltaire*. On the following page, the king asserts that an unprejudiced person will prefer "*La Henriade*" to the poems of *Homer*, which only "delineate the manners of Canadians."¹

To return to our orange peel. The merry and melancholy *La Mettrie* died suddenly in December, 1751, after dining profusely at Lord *Tyreconnel's* too luxurious table. *Voltaire* could cross-examine him no more. "I could have wished," he wrote

¹ *Histoire de mon Temps*, chapter 1. 2 *Cœuvres de Frédéric*, 37.

to his niece, "to ask La Mettrie in his dying moments some news of the orange rind. That good soul, upon the point of appearing before God, would not have been able to lie. There is great appearance that he told the truth. He was the most foolish of men, but he was the most frank. The king inquired very particularly as to the manner of his death; if he had observed all the Catholic forms; if he had derived edification from them. He was told at last that the gourmand died like a philosopher. *'I am very glad of it, for the repose of his soul,'* said the king to us. We laughed, and he also.

"The king said to me yesterday, in the presence of D'Argens, that he would have given a province to have me. That does not look like the rind of the orange. Apparently, he has not promised any province to the Chevalier de Chasot (absent on leave). I am very sure that he will not come back. He is much dissatisfied, and he has more agreeable affairs elsewhere. He will find me competent to arrange mine."

This thorn was never extracted, and it rankled always. Perhaps some kind friend reported to the king a light word of Voltaire's on receiving a batch of the royal poetry to correct, when he is said to have asked, "Will this king want me long for his washerwoman?"¹

¹ Duvernet, chapter xv.

CHAPTER VII.

EMBROILED WITH MAUPERTUIS.

FEW men had more reasons to be content with their position than Maupertuis, president of the Academy of Berlin. The King of Prussia attached very high importance to this institution, founded by Leibnitz in 1701, but which he had resuscitated and developed. He had recently added to it a chemical laboratory, where he sometimes witnessed the rudimentary experiments then in vogue. A botanic garden was among its new features, to which the Bartrams, botanists of Philadelphia, sent contributions. The public sessions of the Academy had great interest and *éclat*. The electrical machine, the air-pump, the thermometer, had then the attraction of novelty, and of fashionable novelty. The king, the queens, the royal princes, the princesses, the resident nobility, ambassadors, and all the throng who go wherever these go enhanced the splendor of special occasions. Except his army and its appurtenances, there was nothing the king valued more. Frugal as he was, we see in his letters to Maupertuis that he gave prompt assent to the president's frequent suggestions, and often empowered him to expend more than the sum mentioned. He evidently desired to attract to his Academy the first men in each science, provided only that they were men of independent minds. In all his efforts to improve and strengthen the Academy, Maupertuis was his confidential agent; who also retained a liberal pension from the King of France, for services rendered to science in his earlier life.

Frederic had assigned the president a spacious and handsome house just out of Berlin, near the royal park, with garden and grounds adjacent. Here Maupertuis had so abundantly gratified his taste for strange animals and peculiar races of men that passers-by might have taken his establishment for a menagerie. There were troupes of dogs, cats, parrots, par-

oquets, monkeys, curious poultry, and other creatures, some of which were savage, and alarmed the visitor. The president, with his mania for odd experiments, took pleasure in mixing the breeds, and loved to descant upon the creatures thus produced. Strange things occurred sometimes in this Noah's ark. At a grand dinner given by Maupertuis, in 1747, to a French ambassador returning from Petersburg to France, an exquisite little parrot walked freely about the table, and at length alighted, with a cherry in its bill, upon the head of Madame the Ambassadors. Upon that splendid elevation the bird ate the cherry with a grace that enchanted the whole table; and there was no harm done, says the narrator of the scene, except that which could be repaired by washing the lady's *coiffure*. Among his other wonders he had an eccentric negro servant, who went with him everywhere, and formed a striking feature of the dinner scene as he stood behind his master's chair.

Maupertuis wielded real power: in other words, he had control over the repute and the subsistence of men. The king had expressly given him the precedence, as president of the Academy, over all the members, "just as a general, who is only a gentleman, commands dukes and princes in an army." It was in his power, also, to give, to take away, to increase, and to diminish the pensions assigned to literary and learned men. All this, added to his natural love of ascendancy, made him one of the most conspicuous and important personages in the society of the capital of Prussia.

But, as the king himself remarked, he was an uneasy spirit, prone to jealousy; and while he was in the polar regions, flattening the earth and flirting with Lapland maidens, he had acquired the habit of drinking brandy, which did not improve a disposition naturally irritable and exacting.¹ The coming of Voltaire had sensibly lessened his importance at court. He knew only too well that the pension given by the king to the poet was two thousand crowns a year greater than his own, and he was consoled by the reflection that there were two dancers at the royal opera who received more than either of them. At the king's suppers he was now totally eclipsed.

¹ Vie de Maupertuis, par La Beaumelle, page 122. 73 Œuvres de Voltaire, 546. 74 Œuvres de Voltaire, 87.

Who was not? As there are tragedians who desire to play "Falstaff," so there are mathematicians who would excel in the festive epigram and the gay repartee. The king, moreover, as was only too manifest, promoted science, in great part, from a sense of duty; but literature he loved with his whole heart. The topics of the supper-table, when Voltaire was present, were likely to be such as gave him opportunities to shine, and in discussing which no living man could equal him. The king's face beamed as he heard from Voltaire's lips happier things than any which had enraptured him in his works; and the guests at a king's table are not backward in applauding what the king applauds. The reader of Voltaire's letters must have remarked that the wit and humor, the curious, frequent felicities of style, which make him among the most readable of writers, were natural to him. The style was the man. His letters to his nieces and most familiar comrades have in them even more of the Voltairean sparkle than others; and all his friends agree that his conversation was more amusingly Voltairean than his writings. We can therefore conceive that a philosopher, strong in the gravities of talk, and accustomed to the first place in conversation, might be unable to enjoy the new-comer.

At first friendly enough, Maupertuis soon showed his "unsociable" side. Voltaire, as it seems, gave him mortal offense without knowing it. There being a vacancy in the Berlin Academy, the poet favored the election of the Abbé Raynal, afterwards so celebrated, and mentioned his preference to the president without reserve. Behold the innocent beginning of a feud that was to resound through coming centuries: —

"MY DEAR PRESIDENT, — I interest myself much more in the Languedocian Raynal than in the Provençal Jean [D'Argens]. I indulged the flattering hope of seeing you here [at Potsdam], but I see plainly that one must go in quest of you. I await the moment when the hero-philosopher who makes me love Potsdam will make me love Berlin. A thousand respects to Madame de Maupertuis. I salute you in Frederic, you and our brothers. From my cell in the most agreeable convent of the earth, 24 October (1750)."

The king gave the vacant place to the Languedocian Raynal; and this, if we may believe Voltaire's repeated declara-

tion, was the beginning and first cause of Maupertuis's enmity to himself. "I have made a violent enemy of that temperate philosopher, Maupertuis, for a useless place of Associate to the Academy of Berlin, given by the king, in spite of his opposition, to the Abbé Raynal."¹ Ill-feeling was developed rapidly between them; each, of course, believing the other to be the aggressor. Anecdotes are not wanting here; but they come to us without dates, as without authority. Something like the following may have occurred: Maupertuis coming in late to a supper in Voltaire's rooms, the poet congratulated him upon one of his moral essays just published. "Your book, *mon président*," said he, "has given me pleasure, though there are some obscurities in it of which we will talk together." Maupertuis, as Duvernet reports, replied, in a hard, offensive manner, "Obscurities! There may be some for *you!*" To which Voltaire is said to have responded, "I esteem you, *mon président*; you are brave; you wish war!"

A more probable tale is that, at the time of the affair with the jeweler, the president refused to aid his countryman. Voltaire asked him to speak on his behalf to one of the commissioners who was appointed to investigate the case, — a favor then considered within the proprieties both to ask and to grant. Maupertuis replied that it was an ugly business, with which he could not be mingled. Such a refusal at such a time is an offense which cannot be effaced from the memory. The cloud that hung heavy and menacing over Voltaire in February, 1751, when he was excluded from the king's presence and threatened with exile and ruin, was quickly dissipated, and he seemed in higher favor than ever. Soon, the splendid, unprecedented success of his "Louis XIV." gave new lustre to his literary eminence, restored all his audacity, and made him stronger than ever in himself. "Ten editions in a year" have their effect on an author's mind, and we may be sure that some friend was good enough to report to him Maupertuis's verdict upon the history, when he compared it to the "gambols of a child."

Toward the end of 1751, some copies of an absurd book, in the La Mettrie style, published in Copenhagen, began to circulate in Berlin, entitled "My Thoughts," — a collection of

¹ Voltaire to D'Argental, August 5, 1752.

unconnected paragraphs, in which subjects of the greatest difficulty and delicacy were treated without knowledge, tact, or reserve. The mind of the author seemed to run very much upon a yet unknown art of *breeding* superior human beings, and he threw out many wild suggestions toward it. This is one of his Thoughts: "Let a prince gather into one city the wisest, the most enlightened, the most virtuous, the best formed persons of either sex whom he can find in his dominions; that city will be a nursery of great men. Princes have studs [*haras*] for horses; they ought to have such for subjects. When they prevent the mixing of breeds, they will be sure of having excellent progeny, both in horses and in men." Imagine a book of which this specimen is among the least unquotable passages! There was one Thought in the work which had a more particular interest for Berlin society.

"If," said the unknown author, "we search both ancient and modern history, we shall find no example of a prince who has given seven thousand crowns a year to a man of letters as man of letters. There have been greater poets than Voltaire; there was never one so well recompensed. . . . The King of Prussia heaps favors upon men of talent for precisely the same reasons that induce a prince of Germany to bestow them upon a buffoon or a dwarf."

Here was matter for the gossips of Berlin! Who was the author of such Thoughts as these? His dedication was signed "Gonia de Palaios," a Greek disguise of part of his name. He was a young French adventurer, named La Beaumelle, settled in Denmark as professor of the French language and literature, one of many Frenchmen who throve upon the fashion for French literature then prevailing in Europe. The paragraph of his work just quoted was soon a topic of conversation in Berlin, even at the king's supper-table, where it was the occasion of many jests and uproarious laughter. Nevertheless, the king did not relish the passage, and Voltaire still less. La Beaumelle had consulted Voltaire upon one of his literary projects, and had received from him a friendly reply. If the king looked further into the "Thoughts," he may have fallen upon this: "Merit reaches the court by baseness, and rises there by impudence; grovel, then, impudently."

The young man acted upon this idea. He resigned his post

at Copenhagen, and in November, 1751, he was at Potsdam, well provided with good letters, and face to face with Voltaire, in the king's palace! He had written announcing his coming, and saying that he visited Prussia for no other purpose than to see three great men who lived in that kingdom. One of these was the author of "Alzire;" and, although he was the second of the three, he wished to see him first. Voltaire, puzzled and curious, received him civilly, kept him to dinner, and expended four hours of his time upon him. La Beaumelle, not aware that Voltaire had seen "My Thoughts," complained of the coolness of a man to whom he paid the homage of a visit.

"He questioned me much," reports La Beaumelle, "and even to indecency. All his questions aimed at ascertaining whether I had designs upon the place of La Mettrie, whose death was just announced. As I had an object a little more elevated than that, and as I was in his abode to pay my homage to him, not to make him my confidant, all my answers tended to convey that I was very far from aspiring to replace La Mettrie. He asked me who the other two great men were whom I had come to see. I told him that one was the king. 'Oh,' he said, 'it is not so easy to see the Reverend Father the Abbé. And the other?' 'M. de Mauvertuis.' He smiled bitterly; it seemed to me that he would have preferred me to say M. Pelloutier, author of an excellent 'History of the Celts.' . . . I tried to gain his good-will; but I perceived that I made no progress toward it. Knowing that he was very sensitive to praise, I was every moment on the point of incensing him. Shame prevented me. I have not the courage to praise to their faces persons whom I esteem or despise."

No allusion to "Mes Pensées" escaped the lips of either of them on this occasion, and La Beaumelle returned to Berlin with only the uncomfortable feeling of a man who has paid a visit at an unfriendly time. He attributed Voltaire's coolness to indigestion, and he went away lamenting that "such a soul should depend upon such a body." He remained at Berlin, where he made himself somewhat conspicuous as one who obviously desired to push himself into the circle of Frenchmen about the king. He was much with Lord Tyreconnell, the

French ambassador ; he courted Darget, the king's reader and scribe ; and the unconscious effrontery of the young man gave him a kind of importance. Voltaire, at length, tried his hand at the business of getting quietly rid of him. When La Beaumelle had been a month in the kingdom, Voltaire wrote him a polite note, to the effect that he would be very much obliged if he would be so good as to lend him a copy of "Mes Pensées," which he had heard highly spoken of. The young man knew not what to do ; he hesitated long ; he consulted Lady Bentinck, who advised him to comply. He sent the book to Voltaire, who, three days after, returned it to the author, with the leaf turned down at page 70, where occurred the passage upon the king's buffoons and dwarfs. The author of the work, far from taking the gentle hint, only waited until Voltaire came to Berlin to intrude upon his privacy once more. La Beaumelle's account of this interview shows Voltaire behaving with self-control and even magnanimity : —

1751

"The 7th of December [1751] the king arrived at Berlin from Potsdam, and M. de Voltaire with him. I went to see him ; he spoke to me of my book ; in a hard, dry tone he criticised it very justly and very severely, which was disagreeable at the time, but has been profitable to me since. He added that the friendly zeal with which he had entered into my project of publishing a series of classics at Copenhagen did not deserve the ill-treatment he had received in that work. I was astonished and surprised at this reproach. I asked him to point out the passage. He mentioned it. I repeated the passage several times, word for word, maintaining always that it tended to his glory. 'Then,' replied he, 'I do not know how to read.' 'That may be,' said I ; 'nevertheless, it remains certain that I have not given, nor wished to give, you cause of offense.' I turned that passage in a hundred different ways ; I could not make him accept it in the only sense it could fairly bear. Ashamed, doubtless, at such foolish quibbling, he fastened upon that other phrase, *There was never any poet so well recompensed as Voltaire*. He said to me that what the king gave him was not a recompense, but a simple indemnification, and he added in these very words, 'You have, no doubt, taken me for a man who has no money.' I told him that I knew he was very rich ; but it was not that which made him estimable. He replied to me that he was an officer and chamberlain of the king. I repeated to him what he had said to Congreve : that, if he had been nothing but a chamberlain, I should not have given myself the trouble to come and

see him. These words seemed to soften him. He assured me that he bore me no ill-will on account of the passage, but that it would not be so easy to make my peace with the Marquis d'Argens, who was neither a buffoon nor a dwarf; nor with the Baron de Pollnitz, who was a man of rank; nor with Count Algarotti, who merited much consideration; nor with M. de Maupertuis, president of an academy, the entrance to which he was firmly resolved to defend against one who had written of men who were the king's friends, rather than his *beaux esprits*, that they were buffoons and dwarfs."

"Had the king read the passage?" asked the young man. Voltaire informed him that the king had read it, and did not like it. "Who had showed it to the king?" It was Darget, the king's secretary, said Voltaire. La Beaumelle hastened to Darget, who advised him in a friendly manner not to prolong his stay in Berlin. Next, he called upon Maupertuis, the official chief of the king's buffoons and dwarfs. In him, at length, he found a sympathizing friend, who declared that the offensive passage had had nothing offensive in it until M. de Voltaire had given it a bad interpretation at the king's table; "as if," says La Beaumelle, "I had wished to assert that the learned men of the court were buffoons and dwarfs, and the king a petty prince of Germany." Maupertuis assured the author of "My Thoughts" that he had evidently meant to say something highly flattering both to the king and his companions. "It was clear," the president said, "that I had wished to say that, as far as the King of Prussia was above a petty prince of Germany, so far were the *savans* of his court above the buffoons and dwarfs with which the petty princes amused themselves." The president advised him to send the king a copy of his book; which he did. Receiving no acknowledgment, he attributed the omission to the machinations of Voltaire, whom he still courted. He wrote an ode on the "Death of the Queen of Denmark," he addressed Memoirs to the king, he circulated freely in the society of Berlin; he was resolved to effect an admission to the king's circle.

In the midst of these endeavors, a humiliating disaster befell him. At the opera one evening, he found next to him a pretty and agreeable woman, the wife of a captain in the Prussian army, who accompanied her. She made an easy conquest of the good-looking young Frenchman, and gave him a rendez-

vous at her own quarters. The husband surprised them there. He thundered forth the wrath of an indignant husband and captain; but it soon appeared that it was the money of the young man, not his blood, which was necessary to appease him. He seized by main force the purse of the victim. It was so meagrely provided that the gallant captain complained to the commandant of Berlin, demanding further reparation for the wrong done him. La Beaumelle was instantly arrested and confined at Spandau, without having been confronted with his accuser, and without having been heard in his defense! The king, the court, the army, the city, laughed at the sudden collapse of the adventurer. The truth, however, soon reached the king, and, after ten days' detention La Beaumelle was reëstablished at Berlin, and the captain and his wife, partners in the iniquity, were prisoners in the fortress of Spandau. To this happy result all the colony of Frenchmen had contributed, Voltaire among the most zealous. So reports Lady Bentinet, who adds that La Beaumelle, on his return from Spandau, flew into Voltaire's arms, thanking him for his services, in a transport of gratitude. His transport, however, was of short duration. He made no progress toward the king, and, being assured that Voltaire was the obstacle in his path, his animosity revived in more than its former intensity.

Voltaire had a particular reason for conciliating this man. In some way, not then known, La Beaumelle had obtained possession of a large number of the letters of Madame de Maintenon, the wife of Louis XIV. and the confidant of his policy during the last twenty-six years of his reign. Imagine what those letters must have been to the author of a "History of the Age of Louis XIV.," just issuing from the press! If he could get a sight of them before copies of his history were distributed, they might prove of great value as a means of correcting possible errors. If he were denied access to them, he might well be alarmed lest their publication should impair the value of many a chapter wrought out with infinite pains from heterogeneous material. He asked La Beaumelle for a sight of them. His request was refused. Voltaire endeavored in various ways to bring him to reason, but, at length, lost patience with him, and their acquaintance ended in a stormy scene at Voltaire's abode, from which La Beaumelle retired vowing eternal ven-

geance. "The rash man will repent of his conduct," said Voltaire. "Repent!" cried La Beaumelle. "It is you, wretch that you are, who will repent! I know all your enormities. I would not pollute my mouth by repeating them; but I shall know how to punish them. I will pursue you even to hell! I mean that you shall say, 'Alas! Desfontaines and Rousseau are alive again.' My hate will live longer than your verses!"

Soon after this scene, which La Beaumelle himself reports, he left Prussia, baffled and humiliated. He failed to gain a foot-hold there simply because the king did not desire him. He went to Gotha; whence he fled in hot haste with a woman of ill-repute, leaving several creditors to mourn his departure. His revenge consisted in this: he published an edition of Voltaire's "Louis XIV.," "augmented by very numerous Remarks by M. de la B." These remarks, as the reader may imagine, were audacious, abusive, and false. The publication of an unauthorized edition of a work while it was still new, for the purpose of injuring the author, was an outrage unique even in that age, and has never since been surpassed. The edition had great success as a speculation, and gave the unscrupulous editor all the notoriety his morbid vanity could desire. In the course of his remarks, however, he discoursed upon members of the royal family of France with a freedom which they resented, and, in consequence, "M. de la B." found himself in the Bastille. Voltaire, too, rose upon him, in due time, and made his name odious forever. "I heard La Beaumelle confess, two years ago," wrote La Harpe, in 1774, "that his conduct was inexcusable, and that it was himself who was first in the wrong toward M. de Voltaire."¹ We shall perhaps have occasion to observe that M. de Voltaire kept him in mind of the fact.

Meanwhile, the author of the "Age of Louis XIV." remained under the impression, which time did not efface, that he owed all this coil of trouble and anxiety to Maupertuis. "If," said he to the King of Prussia and to others, "Maupertuis did not deceive La Beaumelle while he was in Berlin, in order to excite him against me; if Maupertuis can wash his hands of the criminal manœuvres with which La Beaumelle's letter charges him, I am ready publicly to ask Maupertuis's pardon." Thus, the ill-feeling grew ever warmer between these

¹ 1 Correspondance Littéraire, 240.

two combustibles, until there was need only of a very slight occasion to develop a blaze.

The president, too, had an exciting affair upon his hands at this time. He was in desperate feud with an old *protégé* and friend, Samuel Koenig, who had lived for two years at Cirey with Voltaire and Madame du Châtelet, as the lady's tutor in mathematics, a post which he owed to Maupertuis's recommendation. He was now honorably settled in Holland as librarian to the Princess of Orange, and not unknown to the learned men of Europe as an enthusiast for the philosophy of Leibnitz, the first president of the Berlin Academy. It was he who infused Leibnitzian opinions into the mind of Madame du Châtelet, in the very hearing of Voltaire, the apostle of Leibnitz's greatest opponent, Sir Isaac Newton. Koenig remained, however, the grateful and admiring friend of Maupertuis, who was also a Newtonian; and the president, still interested in his welfare, caused him to be elected to a vacant chair in the Berlin Academy. The professor was so keenly gratified by this mark of attention that he came to Berlin in September, 1750, for no other purpose than to see and thank the man to whom he felt himself indebted for substantial services. The president received him with cordiality, and no day passed without their meeting for friendly and philosophic conversation. They had many topics in common, and both were men of varied learning and ardent curiosity. All went well between them until one fatal day, when a subject came under discussion which touched the glory of the illustrious Leibnitz. It was the famous controversy between Leibnitz and Newton upon the discovery of "the infinitely little." Maupertuis maintained that the reply of Leibnitz to Newton consisted of calumnies instead of arguments. Koenig defended his master with the warmth of a hero-worshiper. Maupertuis supported his own view by getting the book, citing passages and comparing dates. "It is all in vain, my poor friend!" cried Koenig; "you will take away nothing from his glory." This to the president of the Berlin Academy and the flattener of the globe! Maupertuis replied that such language was insulting, and bowed him out.¹

The worthy Koenig, however, was prompt to apologize. He

¹ *Vie de Maupertuis, par La Beaumelle, page 139.*

called within a day or two upon the president, and this unhappy breach appeared to be healed. Upon his return to his post, soon after, he completed an essay, begun long before, in the course of which one of Maupertuis's most cherished convictions was modestly called in question, and the authority of the sublime Leibnitz once more invoked against him. Maupertuis claimed to be the discoverer of a great principle running through all nature, — the *principle of the least action*, as he termed it. His position was that nature was a strict economist, and accomplished all things by the least force that would answer the purpose. He had read and published a discourse upon this subject, in which he plumed himself exceedingly upon the "discovery," and drew it out into details that appeared both plausible and trivial to the members of other academies. Koenig submitted his essay to the president before printing it, and offered to suppress it if he had the least objection to its publication. Probably without having done more than glance at the manuscript the president gave his free and full consent to its insertion in the printed "Transactions of Leipsic." It appeared therein, in March, 1751, in the Latin language, when Maupertuis took the trouble to examine it, and found the direst offense in the closing passage.

"I will only," wrote Koenig, "add one word in concluding. It appears that M. de Leibnitz had a theory of action much more extended than would now be supposed; for there is a letter of his, written to M. Hermann, in which he speaks thus: 'Action is not what you think it; the consideration of time enters into it; it is as the product of the mass multiplied by the time, or of the time by the living force. I have observed that, in the modifications of motions, it usually becomes either a maximum or a minimum.'"

The offense of this passage was twofold. It showed Leibnitz at once anticipating and contradicting Maupertuis! The president, deeply stirred, wrote politely to Koenig, asking him for the exact date of the letter and the proofs of its authenticity. Koenig replied at his leisure, not aware that his president attached importance to the matter. He wrote, at length, that he did not possess and had not seen the original; but had taken the passage from a copy of the letter given him, with other copies, by Henzy of Berne, executed for treason some

years before. Maupertuis then wrote to the Prussian envoy in Switzerland, and induced the king also to write, urging him to make diligent search for the letter of Leibnitz. After exhaustive rummaging, the letter was not found, the papers of Henzy having been scattered wide after his death. Maupertuis then summoned Koenig to appear within a month before the Academy, with the original of the letter, or proofs that such a letter had existed. The professor, who had already informed the president that he had taken the passage from a copy, neither appeared nor explained; whereupon Maupertuis convened the Academy, and caused the worthy Koenig to be condemned and expelled as a *forger*! This precipitate and most shameful deed was done April 13, 1752, at a session attended by twenty-two members. The excellent Koenig, upon reading the news in the gazettes, wrote a history of the case, so clear, so circumstantial, so supported by documents, that no candid person has ever read it, or will ever read it, without being convinced of his innocence. He now gave the whole of Leibnitz's letter, with two others in a similar strain, the style and tone of which were unmistakably Leibnitzian.

Until he had read Koenig's "Appeal to the Public," Voltaire, absorbed in labor at Potsdam, had not attended to the controversy, and had gathered a slight impression that his enthusiastic Leibnitzian bore of Cirey was rather in the wrong than otherwise. Koenig's "Appeal to the Public" satisfied him that Maupertuis had done the professor a most cruel injury. Others were also convinced; the journals were full of the subject; and the president found himself not so potent with the public as with his dependents in the Academy. He was in a rage of excitement, drank deeply, and was soon seriously indisposed. "A little less liquor [*rogomme*] and a little more dieting will cure you," wrote the king to him. And again, "No more liquor, no more coffee; and, with the aid of time and sobriety, you will be reëstablished."

Meantime, a "Reply from an Academician of Berlin to an Academician of Paris" appeared in the gazettes, stating Koenig's case with a brevity and clearness that betrayed the hand of Voltaire. It did not calm the fiery Maupertuis.

Now, unhappily, the king, anxious for his sick and excited president, and knowing nothing whatever of Koenig's case,

came, as he hoped, to Maupertuis's rescue. He wrote a small pamphlet entitled, "Letter of an Academician of Berlin to an Academician of Paris," in which he gave a weak version of the story as related to him by Maupertuis. He had not even read Koenig's "Appeal to the Public," although copies were in Berlin;¹ his only thought being to save the life and credit of the president of his darling Academy. This pamphlet was speedily republished, with the royal arms on the cover, and thus Europe was notified that the King of Prussia believed Professor Koenig guilty of forging evidence to rob a brother *savan*, to rob a benefactor, of his glory as a discoverer. It was a hasty, well-meant, bad action on the king's part, as the reader may see by referring to the pamphlet in the works of the king.² Maupertuis might as well have written upon a question of tactics or army discipline.

It was on such occasions that Voltaire was wont to use and exhaust the resources of the literary art. He now wrote and published a letter to Professor Koenig, which the pen of mortal has not surpassed for elegant, quiet effectiveness; so entertaining that the dullest reader must hold out to the end; so convincing that to prejudice itself it must have given pause. The art of it is altogether exquisite. He poses Koenig advantageously against Maupertuis by the device of sending him two copies of his "Louis XIV.," one for himself, the other for the library of her Royal Highness, "to whom I beg you to make this homage acceptable, with my profound respect." After some chatty paragraphs upon his History, he glides into his subject, which he treats in the tone of the familiar letter, with equal moderation and force. The president's error was merely "a mistake of self-love." He did not sufficiently scrutinize the passage from Leibnitz sent him beforehand for his examination.

"He believed it contained his thought; it contains his refutation. Was it necessary, then, for him to employ so much artifice and violence, that he should fatigue so many powers, and that he should pursue those who condemn to-day his error and his proceedings, for four lines of Leibnitz ill-understood, for a dispute which is in no degree enlightened, and the foundation of which seems to be altogether frivolous?"

¹ 15 Œuvres de Frédéric, 60.

² 15 Œuvres, 59.

Pardon me this freedom; you know, monsieur, that I am a little enthusiastic when I think I have the truth. You have been a witness that I sacrifice my conviction to no one. You remember the two years which we passed together in a philosophic retreat with a lady of astonishing genius and worthy to be instructed by you in mathematics. However warm the friendship which attached me to her and to you, I always took sides against your opinion and hers in the controversy concerning *living forces*. I maintained audaciously the view of M. de Mairan against both of you; and, what is amusing, when the lady afterwards wrote against M. de Mairan upon that point of mathematics, I corrected her work, and wrote against her. I did the same upon the *monades* and the *preëstablished harmony*, in which, I confess to you, that I do not believe at all. I sustained all my heresies without the least detriment to my affection. I could not sacrifice what appeared to me to be the truth to a person for whom I would have sacrificed my life. You will not, then, be surprised when I say, with that intrepid frankness which is known to you, that all those disputes in which there is a blending of metaphysics and geometry seems to me to be mere *jeux d'esprit*, which exercise the mind and not enlighten it. . . . If M. de Maupertuis has recently invented that principle of the *least action*, it is very well; but it seems to me that he need not have disguised a thing so clear in ambiguous terms."

But no extracts avail to convey an idea of the aptness and graceful force of this letter. It avenged and completely restored Koenig. But it was not soothing to the president of the Berlin Academy, who was still confined to his house by indisposition.

CHAPTER VIII.

“DOCTOR AKAKIA.”

AT this point the affair might well have rested ; justice was done. If M. Koenig had been deeply wronged, he was magnificently compensated, and he stood before Europe in a really brilliant light. Maupertuis was humiliated, it is true, but he still held his place ; a king had defended him ; and the public does not delay long to forget or forgive the error of a meritorious man who continues to serve it.

Rogomme had proved a pernicious beverage to the flattener of the earth ; but, unfortunately, he sought to alleviate the tedium of his convalescence by a liquid still more blasting. It was ink that finished poor Maupertuis. He now set about writing a series of “Letters” in the style of the “Thoughts” of his friend and *protégé*, La Beaumelle ; nay, even more crotchety, abrupt, and ridiculous. He said expressly in his preface, “I free myself from the reserves to which I should not be able to submit. I shall follow no order ; I shall treat subjects as they present themselves to my mind ; I shall indulge, perhaps, in contradictions ; upon every subject I shall say what I think at the moment of writing ; and what subjects are there upon which a man ought always to think in the same manner ? ”

Readers who are acquainted with these twenty-three “Letters” of Maupertuis’s only from Voltaire’s burlesque repetitions may have imagined that Voltaire invented or exaggerated their absurdity. Not so ; Maupertuis, president of the Berlin Academy, seriously made the suggestions which Voltaire imputes to him. He does actually propose the excavation of an enormous hole in the earth, that we may know something of its contents. He suggests that one of the pyramids of Egypt should be blown up, that mankind may at length ascertain the purpose for which they were built. “The use of gunpowder,” he says, “would render easy the complete

overturn of one of those pyramids; and the Grand Seigneur would surrender them with perfect willingness to the least curiosity of a king of France." The Latin language, he observes, is learned imperfectly and with great difficulty; why not create a Latin city, where the clergymen would preach in Latin, the lawyers plead in Latin, the actors speak in Latin? "The young men," he adds, "who would repair from the countries of Europe to that city, would learn more Latin in a year than they do at the colleges in five or six years." Doctors, he thought, ought never to be paid unless they cure a patient. He expressed the opinion that light could be thrown on the nature of the human mind by dissecting the brains of living men. But what men? In Patagonia there was then supposed to be a race of giants; and he advised an expedition to that unknown region, for the inspection of the brains of men ten or twelve feet high. Nearer home, the brains of criminals condemned to death might be utilized for this purpose. Some people, he adds, would think there was cruelty in such a mode of death; but scruples of that nature must not be regarded. "Compared with the human race, a man is nothing; a criminal is still less than nothing."

Maupertuis was an early friend of vivisection, and had been in the habit of experimenting upon living cats. A duchess said to him one day, "How is it that you who love cats can practice such cruelty?" He replied, "Madame, one has under-cats for experiments of that nature."

He had been, apparently, much impressed with La Mettrie's constant assertion that the something which men called *soul* resulted from the working of the "machine" which they style *body*. He thought that as man now sees the past, so he might, by exalting his soul with opium, discern the future also, and, perhaps, by retarding the development of the body, through some process yet to be discovered, could prolong life indefinitely.

These samples will suffice of a work such as only a philosopher mad with confinement and *rogomme* could have given to a scoffing world. Voltaire, at first, really thought him a madman. "In the midst of these quarrels," he wrote to Madame Denis, October 1, 1752, "Maupertuis has become entirely *fou*. You are aware that he was chained at Montpellier in one of his

attacks twenty years ago." The king, however, who thought little better of the book than Voltaire, wrote to compliment the author. "I have read your 'Letters,'" he began, "which, despite your critics, are well written and profound. I repeat what I have said to you before: put your spirit in repose, my dear Maupertuis, and regard not the buzzing of the insects of the air. Your reputation is too well established to be overturned by the first wind." In all ways possible the King of Prussia supported the waning prestige of the president of his Academy. So he would have backed a general in command, whose manœuvres he privately censured, but whose authority and reputation he felt it necessary to maintain.

"Oh, that mine enemy had written a book!" Maupertuis had written a book; Voltaire held it in his hands; and at the same time came new provocation. Almost simultaneously issued from the press the "Letters" of the president and the avowed edition of the king's "Letter" defending him against Voltaire and Koenig,—the edition bearing on the title-page the arms of the reigning house of Prussia. Never did a cat pounce upon a mouse with such gayety of heart as Voltaire upon the president's foolish little volume; nor ever did a cat amuse itself with such a variety of ingenious, playful, graceful torture as that to which he now subjected Maupertuis. In the very palace of the king, too! Voltaire was still living and toiling in the château at Potsdam, correcting the king's verses and sending him his own; no word having yet passed between them upon this affair of Maupertuis and Koenig; each affecting not to know that the other had publicly taken sides.

"The king's pamphlet [wrote Voltaire to Madame Denis, October 18, 1752] has been reprinted at Berlin, with the eagle of Prussia, a crown, a sceptre, upon the title-page. The eagle, the sceptre, and the crown were much astonished to find themselves there. Every one shrugs his shoulders, casts down his eyes, and dares not speak. If truth is a stranger to the throne, it is especially so when a king turns author. Coquettes, kings, poets, are accustomed to be flattered. Frederic reunites those three crowns. There is no way of making the truth pierce that triple wall of self-love. Maupertuis has not succeeded in being Plato, but he wishes his master to be Denys of Syracuse. The rarest thing in this cruel and ridiculous affair is that the king does not in the least like Maupertuis, in whose favor he employs

his sceptre and his pen. Plato came near dying of grief for not having been at certain little suppers to which I was admitted, and the king has confessed to us a hundred times that the ferocious vanity of Maupertuis rendered him unsociable. . . . I have no sceptre, but I have a pen; and I have, I know not how, cut that pen in such a way as to turn Plato a little into ridicule upon his giants, upon his dissections, upon his predictions, upon his impertinent quarrel with Koenig. . . . I have against me self-love and despotic power, two very dangerous entities."

He had no sceptre, but he had a pen! In this remark we have the key to much that follows. It became a contest between a young king with "a hundred and fifty thousand mustachios in his service" and an elderly man, of infirm health, armed only with a gray goose-quill. Twice already he had employed this terrible weapon in the strife; now he lifted it a third time, and produced the first part of that "Diatribes of Doctor Akakia, Physician to the Pope," of which Macaulay says that no one with the least sense of humor can read it without "laughing till he cries."

Akakia is a Greek word meaning *guileless, innocent*. The "Doctor Akakia" of Voltaire is a physician who has read the volume of "Letters," bearing on the title-page the name of Maupertuis, president of the Berlin Academy, in which the public are advised not to pay doctors unless they effect a cure, and in which other ideas are advanced not less peculiar. *Can* the president of an Academy have really written such things? It is impossible, thinks the amiable Akakia.

"Nothing [he remarks] is more common to-day than for young, unknown authors to publish under known names works little worthy of them. There are charlatans of every kind. Here is one who has taken the name of the president of a very illustrious Academy in order to peddle off rubbish singular enough. It is demonstrated that the respectable president is not the author of the books attributed to him; for that admirable philosopher, who discovered that nature always acts by the simplest laws, and who so wisely adds that she is always disposed to be sparing, would have certainly spared the small number of persons capable of reading him the trouble of reading twice over the same thing, — first in the book entitled his 'Works,' and then in that called his 'Letters.' One third at least of the latter is copied from the other, word for word. That great man, so incapable of charlatan-ism, would not have given to the public letters written to no one, and,

above all, would not have fallen into certain trifling faults which are pardonable only in a young man.

“I believe as much as possible that it is not at all the interest of my profession that induces me to speak on this occasion; but I shall be pardoned if I find it a little hard that this writer should treat physicians as he treats his booksellers. He is unwilling the doctor should be paid when, unfortunately, a patient does not get well. An artist, he says, is not paid for painting a bad picture. Oh, young man, how hard and unjust you are! Did not the Duke of Orleans, Regent of France, pay magnificently for the daub with which Coipel adorned the gallery of the Palais-Royal? Does a client deprive his advocate of just compensation because he has lost his cause? A physician promises his endeavors, not a cure. He does his best, and he is paid. What! would you be jealous even of the doctors?

“What would a man say, I pray you, who should have, for example, a pension of twelve hundred ducats a year, for having discoursed of mathematics and metaphysics, for having dissected two frogs, and for having had his portrait taken in a fur cap, if the treasurer should address him thus: ‘Sir, you are cut down a hundred ducats for writing that there are stars shaped like mill-stones; a hundred ducats more for having written that a comet will come to steal our moon, and carry its attempts even against the sun itself; a hundred ducats more for having imagined that comets composed entirely of gold or diamond will fall upon the earth. You are taxed three hundred ducats for having affirmed that children are formed by attraction, that the left eye attracts the right leg, etc. We cannot reduce you less than four hundred ducats for having imagined that the nature of the soul could be understood by means of opium and by dissecting giants’ heads,’ etc., etc. It is clear that the poor philosopher, when his accounts were made up, would lose all his revenue. Would it not be very easy after that for us other doctors to laugh at him, and to assure him that rewards are intended only for those who write useful things, and not for those who are known only through their desire to make themselves known?

“Our young reasoner pretends that physicians should be empirical only, and advises them to banish theory. What would you say of a man who should advise us not to employ architects in building-houses, but only masons, who cut stone at hap-hazard? He gives also the sage advice to neglect anatomy. Here we shall have the surgeons on our side. We are only astonished that an author who has had some little obligations to the surgeons of Montpellier in maladies which require a great knowledge of the interior of the head, and of some other parts appertaining to anatomy, should have so little gratitude.

"The same author, unversed apparently, in history, in speaking of his plan to render the punishments of criminals useful by making experiments upon their bodies, asserts that this suggestion has never been carried out. He does not know, what every one else knows, that in the time of Louis XI. the operation for the stone was performed for the first time in France upon a man condemned to death; that the late Queen of England caused the inoculation for the small-pox to be tried upon four criminals; and there are other similar examples.

"But if our author is ignorant, we are obliged to admit that he has by way of compensation a singular imagination. He wishes, as a physician, that we should avail ourselves of the centrifugal force for curing apoplexy, and make the patient spin around. The idea, in truth, is not his own; but he gives it an air entirely new. He advises us to cover a sick man with pitch, or to pierce his skin with needles. If ever he practices medicine, and proposes such remedies, it is highly probable that his patients will follow the advice which he gives them, — not to pay the doctor.

"But, what is strange, this cruel enemy of the faculty, who wishes so pitilessly to reduce our income, proposes, by way of solacing us, to ruin our patients. He orders (for he is despotic) that every doctor should treat but one disease; so that if a man has the gout, fever, cholera, sore eyes, and the earache he will have to pay five doctors instead of one. But perhaps it is also his intention that we should receive only the fifth part of the usual fee. I see clearly the malice of that suggestion. Forthwith, the pious will be advised to have spiritual directors for each vice: one for serious ambition concerning little things; one for jealousy hidden under a hard and imperious air; one for the rage of intriguing prodigiously for trifles; one for other mean foibles. But we are wandering from the subject. We return to our colleagues.

"The best doctor, he says, is he who reasons least. He appears to be in philosophy as faithful to that axiom as Father Canaie was in theology. Nevertheless, despite his hatred of reasoning, we perceive that he has made profound meditations upon the art of prolonging life. First, he agrees, with all sensible people, and we congratulate him upon it, that our forefathers lived from eight to nine hundred years. Then, having discovered by his own efforts, and independently of Leibnitz, that maturity is not the period of virility, but of death, he proposes to retard that maturity, as people preserve eggs by hindering them from hatching. It is a beautiful secret, and we advise him to secure to himself the honor of this discovery in some poultry-yard, or by a criminal sentence of some Academy.

"It is evident from the account we have rendered that, if these im-

aginary letters were really written by a president, it could only be a president of Bedlam, and that they are incontestably, as we have said, the production of a young man who has wished to adorn himself with the name of a sage respected, as we know, in all Europe, and who has consented to be pronounced a great man. We have seen sometimes, at the Carnival in Italy, a harlequin disguised as an archbishop; but he is quickly discovered from the manner in which he gives the benediction. Sooner or later a man is found out, which recalls a fable of La Fontaine: 'A little end of an ear, unfortunately protruded, reveals the cheat and the mistake.' In the present case, we see ears entire."

At this point the modest and gentle Akakia, physician to the Pope, submits the book to the Holy Inquisition, deferring humbly to the infallible wisdom of that learned tribunal, "in which, as is well known, physicians have so much faith." Voltaire knew all the power of repetition, and he used it in this Diatribe with killing effect. Play-goers are familiar with this device, having seen many a dull play enlivened by the mere repetition of a comic phrase. By bringing the Inquisition upon the scene, he gets three opportunities to repeat the absurdest ideas of the president, as well as to introduce several not before mentioned. First, he gives the decree of the Inquisition anathematizing the attempt to prove the existence of God by an algebraic formula. Next, follows the judgment of the Collège de La Sapience, condemning Maupertuis's vaunted discovery of the minimum of force, "half taken from Leibnitz." Then we have the elaborate report of a sub-committee appointed by the chief of the Inquisition to examine the "Letters" of "the young author," already reviewed by Doctor Akakia. Here the choice morsels of absurdity in Maupertuis's book are joyously tossed in the air, for the diversion of Monsieur l'Inquisiteur. But, laugh as he might at the notion of dissecting giants twelve feet high in order to get to the bottom of the nature of human intelligence, there was matter in the book in which the Inquisitor could not find amusement.

"He will laugh no more when he shall see that everybody can become a prophet; for the author finds no more difficulty in seeing the future than the past. . . . We do not yet know whether he will be a prophet in his own country, nor whether he will be one of the greater or minor prophets; but we fear

much that he will be a prophet of evil, since even in his treatise upon "Happiness" he speaks only of affliction. . . . He ought again to be assured that it will be very difficult for him to execute his scheme of digging a hole to the centre of the earth (where, apparently, he wishes to hide his shame at having advanced such ideas). That hole would require the excavation of at least three or four hundred leagues of country, which could derange the system of the balance of Europe."

In conclusion, the committee bestows upon the young "candidate" its affectionate admonition. The good Doctor Akakia is requested to administer to him some cooling drinks, and the examiners exhort him to study in some university and to be modest there. But the most important advice which they give him is the following:—

"If ever some fellow-student comes to him to suggest in a friendly spirit an opinion different from his own; if he confides to him that he supports that opinion upon the authority of Leibnitz and several other philosophers; if, in particular, he shows him a letter of Leibnitz which formally contradicts our candidate, let not the said candidate jump to the conclusion, and proclaim it everywhere, that a letter of Leibnitz has been forged for the purpose of despoiling him of the glory of being a discoverer.

"Let him not take the error into which he has fallen upon a point of dynamics, which is totally devoid of utility, for an admirable discovery.

"If that comrade, after having communicated to him several times his work, in which he combats the candidate in terms the most polite and with eulogy, should print it with his consent, let him beware of causing that work of an opponent to pass for a crime of academic high treason.

"If that comrade declares several times that he obtained the letter of Leibnitz, as well as several others, from a man who died some years before, let not the candidate take a malignant advantage of the avowal; let him never demand, in a frivolous dispute, that a dead man should come to life for the purpose of bringing back the useless original draught of a letter of Leibnitz, and let him reserve that miracle for the time when he shall prophesy; let him not compromise any one in a controversy about nothing, which vanity can render important; and let him not bring the gods into a war between rats and frogs.

"We conclude by exhorting him to be docile, to engage in serious studies, and not in vain cabals; for what a *savan* gains in intrigues he loses in genius, just as, in mechanics, what is gained in time is lost in

force. We have seen but too often young people, who have begun by giving high hopes and good works, end with writing nothing but folly, because they have wished to be skillful courtiers, instead of skillful writers; because they have substituted vanity for study, and the dissipation which weakens the intellect for the application which strengthens it. They have been praised, and then ceased to be praiseworthy; they have desired to seem, and ceased to be; for when, in an author, the sum of errors equals the sum of absurdities, *nothingness is the equivalent of his existence* [*le néant vaut son existence*].”¹

Here ended the first portion of the “Diatribes of Doctor Akakia,” as written in the château of Potsdam in November, 1752. Considering the conduct of Maupertuis toward Koenig, which might have been ruinous but for Voltaire’s interference, we cannot regard this light, bantering “Diatribes” as an unjust or an excessive admonition. Maupertuis had been arbitrary, precipitate, and cruel toward an ancient friend.

But Akakia was not yet printed; it was a mere manuscript in the palace of an absolute king, who had adopted the defense of his president as something due to the royal authority. Nothing could be printed in Potsdam without the king’s permission, and that permission had to be attested by his sign-manual. In these circumstances, it required almost as rare a kind of person to get the Diatribes before the public as to compose it. He had had this year an amicable controversy with Chaplain Formey upon the character of Lord Bolingbroke, whose recent death had called forth much hostile comment in more than one country. Bolingbroke was a deist; and, although neither his life nor his writings adorned the name, absurd importance was then attached to a dissolute nobleman’s theory of the universe. Even at the present time, Dr. Johnson’s brutal remark upon Lord Bolingbroke’s posthumous works is occasionally quoted without disapproval. Voltaire lamented the confused, declamatory nothingness of his early friend’s writings; but not the less did he defend his honor against defamation. In a tract of thirty or forty pages he endeavored to show that, because a man was compelled to differ in opinion from many of his fellow-citizens, he did not thereby forfeit all right to consideration. The boisterous and open debauchery of Bolingbroke’s youth — that bad recoil from the repellent

¹ A noted phrase from Maupertuis.

Puritanism of his early home — was not forgotten by the defenders of the faith. Voltaire touched upon this point very happily. He denied the relevancy of the argument : —

“ In what case [he inquired] is it permitted us to reproach a man for the disorders of his life? Perhaps in this case alone: when his conduct is inconsistent with his teachings. We might fairly contrast the sermons of a certain famous preacher of our time with the thefts which he committed upon Lord Galloway, and with his gallant intrigues. We might compare the sermons of the celebrated chaplain of the Invalides and those of Fautin, curate of Versailles, with the suits brought against them for having seduced and plundered their penitents. We might compare the conduct of so many Popes and bishops with the religion which they sustained by fire and sword. We might exhibit, on the one hand, their rapines, their illegitimate children, their assassinations, and, on the other, their bulls and their pastoral addresses. Writing on such subjects, we are excusable if we fail in charity, which requires us to conceal the faults of our brethren. But who told the defamer of Lord Bolingbroke that he loved wine and women? And suppose he did love them: if he had had as many concubines as David, as Solomon, as the Grand Turk, should we know any better the true author of the Pentateuch?”

This ingenious and amusing pamphlet Voltaire read to the king, and besought his permission to have it printed at the royal press in Potsdam. Frederic most willingly assented; the essay was entirely to his taste, and he liked to displease, in a harmless way, the orthodox family, so nearly related to him, who occupied the royal houses of England. He wrote the permit in the usual way on the last leaf of the manuscript, which the author at once handed to the official printer. After receiving and returning a few pages of proof, he asked the printer to give him back the manuscript for a day or two, as he wished to make some alterations and corrections. The printer complying, the author gave him *Akakia* in its stead. When the *Diatribes* was all in type, he finished by supplying the remainder of the Bolingbroke, on the last page of which was the royal permit.¹ No sooner had he obtained printed copies than he took care to send one or two beyond the swoop of the Prussian eagle.

It was, as I conjecture, in the midst of this audacious opera-

¹ 2 *Mémoires sur Voltaire, par Wagnière et Longchamp*, 345.

tion, but when already the Diatribe was beyond the author's or the king's control, that some tell-tale conveyed to Frederic an intimation that Voltaire had written something terrible in ridicule of the president of the Berlin Academy. The king sent for him. He came, and then the king spoke to him on the subject of his affair with Maupertuis for the first time. The interview is variously related, but there is no doubt that Frederic addressed him at some stage of the affair in terms like these:—

“They say you have written a satire against Maupertuis, very witty and severe. I will speak to you with freedom and as a friend. I will not say that Maupertuis has done you no injury, nor that you have done him none. You have both a right to complain, and for his sake alone I would surrender him to you willingly. But consider: I called that man into my service; I placed him at the head of my Academy; I have treated him with the same consideration as a cabinet minister; I have admitted him to my most familiar society; I have allowed him to marry one of the ladies of honor to the queen, the daughter of one of my ministers, a lady belonging to one of the most ancient and important families of my kingdom. If you dishonor him, I shall certainly be ridiculed. The nobility of Prussia will be mortified, and they will attribute the scandal to my forbearance. Reflect upon these circumstances, and see what I ought to expect from your friendship.”

Imagine much more to the same purpose, with abundant compliments to the genius of an author who could throw away a dozen Akakias without detriment to his glory. In a moment of effusion (so the tale continues) Voltaire offered to bring the manuscript of his Diatribe, and place it at the disposal of the king, protesting, at the same time, that he deemed the production just and moderate.

“Bring it at once!” cried the king. “I will wait for you; such noble intentions must not be postponed.”

In a few moments Voltaire was again in the king's room, reading to him the “Diatribe of Doctor Akakia,” at which, it is said, his majesty “laughed to dislocation.” The termination of this interview is given in two ways. One version is that, at the end of the reading, Voltaire threw the manuscript into the fire, to the equal sorrow of both, and that, while the

book was burning, the monarch and the author performed fantastic dances around the fire-place. But the tradition in the Voltairean circle, as reported by the Abbé Duvernet, is even more remarkable. According to this version, Voltaire threw the manuscript into the fire; but, before it was consumed, the king, unwilling that so amusing a production should be forever lost, snatched it blazing from the flames. Voltaire, insisting on the sacrifice, placed it again on the fire with the tongs. Again the king rescued it, in spite of Voltaire's utmost efforts. Duvernet thus concludes the story: "The king burned his sleeves and saved the book; and the two philosophers finished by laughing and embracing."

These details may be erroneous. It is, however, evident from the correspondence that scenes *like* these occurred between the king and the author, and that Frederic remained for some days under the impression that he had saved his president from the catastrophe threatened him by the publication of Akakia. A singed manuscript under lock and key, with "La Pucelle" and other forbidden fruit, could do Maupertuis little harm, and bring no scandal upon the nobility of Prussia; or, as Frederic himself wrote to Voltaire, years after (in 1759), when this tempest had blown past, "A man may write what he pleases, and with impunity, too, without having a hundred and fifty thousand men, provided he prints nothing of it."

CHAPTER IX.

LEAVING PRUSSIA.

BEFORE venturing upon such proceedings as these in the palace of a king, he had nearly concluded preparations for retreat. In September, 1752, weeks before Akakia was written, he told Madame Denis that he was about to invest the large capital he had in Berlin in an annuity for both their lives upon the French estates of the Duke of Wurtemberg. The terms were agreed upon, and the duke had given his word; "only the word of a prince, it is true, but princes keep their word in small matters." He had lost money, he added, with bankers, with devotees, with people of the Old Testament, who scrupled to eat a larded chicken, and would rather die than not be idle on the Sabbath or not steal on Sunday; "but I have never lost anything with nobles except my time." He assured her that she could count upon the solidity of this investment, and upon his departure. "I shall set sail from the island of Calypso as soon as my cargo is ready, and much more glad shall I be to find my niece again than old Ulysses was to find his old wife." This was written September 9, 1752, in the château of Potsdam.

Whither was he going, then? His desire had been to return to his own house at Paris, and resume there the way of life interrupted two years before. All his labors in Prussia were done with a view to a happy return to his native land; particularly his history of Louis XIV. Madame Denis still kept his house there, and spent his money with a free hand. She had written a comedy lately, "The Coquette," which she desired to see performed at the national theatre. It required all the tact of her uncle to save her from that rash experiment, without giving her mortal offense.

Longchamp was factotum no more. Madame Denis had detected him in copying the manuscripts confided to his care,

including works and portions of works not less perilous than precious to the author of them. A Madame Lafond and her husband, servants inherited from Madame du Châtelet, had taken part in the treason. Madame Denis, with something of her uncle's own energy, had surprised the Lafonds in their room, Longchamp in his, and had discovered traitorous material in both. All literature then was brigandage, as it ever must be in the absence of legal protection; and Voltaire, more than any other author, was a victim to such infidelities. But he had never had such occasion for alarm as now, when he had resolved to abandon Prussia, without being quite sure of a permission to return to France. He met this emergency with so much skill as to avert immediate calamity. It was not a case for an explosion of anger; the secretary was the repository of too many dangerous secrets for that. Voltaire wrote to him in gentle terms, urging him to repentance and reparation, promising pardon and reward if he told all the truth. The reply of Longchamp gives us an insight into the situation of Voltaire at this period which, perhaps, no other document affords. It shows us what a bold game he played in defying the King of Prussia when difficulties were accumulating against his peaceful settlement anywhere else on the continent. He might well temporize with his secretary.

"I opened your letter with trembling [wrote the traitor, March 30, 1752], fearing to find you as angry with me as my imprudence deserved. But I discovered in it a forbearance which I had no right to expect. I recognized how wrong I had been, and the gravity of the fault I had committed. You promise me pardon, which is the object of my desire, and which I believe I have merited by my repentance.

. . . . "As to your own works, I have never taken away any manuscript or any book. I copied and had the porter copy the 'General History,' some leaves of the campaigns of the king, and some other fragments. With these papers was also found 'La Pucelle,' which I copied at Cirey from the manuscript of Madame du Châtelet, when I did not know you were the author. I have explained everything to your niece, and the whole has been burned. While I had those copies, no part of them went out of my possession, and I let no one see them. I have made the sacrifice entirely, and have kept back nothing whatever. . . . The goodness of your heart reassures me, and makes me hope that, notwithstanding my unhappy weakness in

betraying your confidence, you will not refuse me some marks of that benevolence which you promised me formerly, and that, by an act of pure generosity, you will enable me to form an establishment, and let me owe to you alone my happiness and fortune. I await with confidence the fulfillment of your promises, and am, with veneration and the most profound respect, monsieur, your very humble and very obedient servant.”¹

Voltaire accepted his penitence, and closed his mouth with benefits. He paid him the eighteen months' wages due, and gave him an equal sum as a gratuity. Provided thus with a small capital, Longchamp married, set up in the Rue St. Jacques as a dealer in maps, charts, and other geographical ware, in which he thrived for many years, and lived long enough to welcome his aged master to Paris in 1778.

Such narrow escapes as this could not reassure the author of so much explosive material; and now that his “Louis XIV.” was under the ban, the work which he had hoped would secure his triumphal welcome home, he may well have been in doubt whither to direct his steps. The subject was much in his thoughts for the next two years.

Meanwhile, he was in Prussia, chamberlain to the King of Prussia, with the cross and key upon his breast, in the king's own house, with the king's guards all about him, and a “Diatribes of Doctor Akakia” in the press. He had never before been so much a king himself. From all quarters still came new attestations of the welcome given to his “Louis XIV.” “As yet,” wrote Lord Chesterfield at this time, introducing his son Stanhope, “I have read it only four times, because I wish to forget it a little before reading it a fifth. But I find that impossible. . . . Above all, I thank you for the light you have thrown upon the follies and outrages of the different sects.” Ridicule and contempt, he thought, were the only treatment suited to those madmen and impostors. In the theatres of Europe, Voltaire was still the unrivaled living dramatist; the tender “Zaïre” still drew nightly tears, and the Ciceronian swell of “Rome Sauvée” was relished in the cloister not less than on the stage. At present, in authorship, there is a subdivision of labor; but he essayed many kinds, and had popular success in all. Multitudes of people in Europe could have

¹ 2 Mémoires sur Voltaire, par Longchamp et Wagnière, 347.

sincerely echoed Lord Chesterfield in the letter just quoted : " Whenever I read your last history, I desire that you should be always an historian ; but when I read ' Rome Sauvée,' I wish you to be always a poet." ¹

To resume the story of Akakia. For several days the King of Prussia appears to have remained under the delusion that the Diatribe was to be merely one of its author's many secret manuscripts. Conceive his amazement, his boiling indignation, when, about November 20, 1752, he discovered that it had been printed at Potsdam, in his own printing-office, by his own printer ! He had the printer summoned and interrogated. That official in terror exhibited the royal permit, written in the king's own hand ; his innocence was manifest. The edition was seized, as well as every copy that could be found. Frederdorff, the king's factotum, confronted the author, who resorted to his usual device of total and emphatic disavowal. He knew nothing about the printing of a Diatribe ; people were much given to corrupting his servants and procuring copies of his works filled with errors. Frederdorff, by the king's orders, threatened him with fine, as well as arrest, but without eliciting anything like confession. Upon this, Frederic wrote to him thus : —

"Your effrontery astonishes me. After what you have just done, which is as clear as the day, you persist in denying, instead of confessing yourself guilty. Do not imagine that you will make people believe that black is white ; when one does not see it is (often) because he does not wish to see ; but if you push the affair to the end, I will cause the whole to be printed, and it will then be seen that, if your works entitle you to statues, your conduct deserves chains.

" P. S. The printer has been interrogated ; he has revealed everything." ²

Tradition adds that a sentry was placed at the door of the offender, with orders to let no one pass except his servants. After reading the king's letter, he appears to have written his answer under it, on the same sheet of paper, and sent it back to the king by the same messenger. " This note," says the editor of Frederic's works, " was written under the preceding : " —

¹ Chesterfield's Letters to his Son. August 27, 1752.

² 22 Œuvres de Frédéric, 301.

“ Ah, *mon Dieu*, sire! In my present condition, too! I swear to you again, upon my life, which I willingly renounce, that it is a frightful calumny. I implore you to have all my servants examined. What! You judge without hearing me! I ask justice and death.”

This did not appease the king nor remove the sentinel. Some days passed, during which the offender remained, as we may say, “ under arrest,” though not deprived of his weapon, which he continued to use with his usual industry. Frederic, November 27th, wrote with his own hand a pledge for Voltaire to sign, which he sent him, apparently, as a condition of his release: —

“ Potsdam, November 27, 1752. I promise his majesty that, so long as he does me the favor to lodge me at the château, I will write against no one: neither against the government of France, nor against the ministers, nor against other sovereigns, nor against illustrious men of letters, to whom I will render the respect which is their due. I will not abuse the letters of his majesty, and I will govern myself in a manner becoming a man of letters, who has the honor to be a chamberlain of his majesty, and who lives with respectable people.”

This curious document, in the king's hand, is still preserved in the Prussian archives. Voltaire did not sign it. Instead of putting his name, he appended on the same paper a letter to the king, commenting in a skillful and delicate manner upon some of the absurdities of the pledge drawn up for him.

“ I shall execute, sire, all the orders of your majesty, and my heart will have no reluctance to obey you. I implore you again to consider that I have never written against any government, least of all against that under which I was born, and which I left for no other reason than to come and finish my life at your feet. I have been historiographer of France, and in that character I have written the ‘ History of Louis XIV.,’ and of the campaigns of Louis XV., which I have sent to M. d'Argenson. My voice and my pen have been consecrated to my country, as they now are to you. I implore you to have the goodness to examine the grounds of the quarrel with Maupeou. I implore you to believe that I forget this quarrel, since you command it. I submit without hesitation to all your will. If your majesty had ordered me not to defend myself, and not

to enter into this literary dispute, I should have obeyed with the same submission. I entreat you to spare an old age-borne down with sickness and pain, and to believe that I shall die as much attached to you as on the day when I arrived at your court." ¹

The ingenuity of this epistle may have had more weight with an angry monarch than its justice. After an arrest of "eight days," the sentinel was withdrawn, and the offender was free to go and come.

Frederic's circle of supper companions was diminishing; the worthy Darget was about to return to France, his place supplied by another Frenchman, a recent fugitive from the land of Boyer and the Sorbonne, — the Abbé de Prades. Maupertuis was not available for supper gayeties at present. Strange to say, scarcely any one could long endure the envied companionship of this most companionable of kings; and those who remained longest besought long leaves of absence. Frederic clung to Voltaire. He did not resume at once friendly converse with the author of *Akakia*; but, doubtless, would have quickly done so, but for new and worse offenses. If the king could only have complied with Voltaire's request, and "examined the *grounds* of the quarrel with Maupertuis," he would have managed this affair better than he did. But, unhappily, he was a king, and Maupertuis was his president.

Some days after the affair of the Diatribe, the court removed to Berlin for the Christmas festivities. Voltaire came also; but found lodgings at a friend's house, not in the royal palace as before. Frederic was at peace with regard to *Akakia*. He believed that he had terrified Voltaire by the menace of a great fine, which Fredersdorff had conveyed to the capitalist, who was about to invest a large sum with the Duke of Wurtemberg. "Fear nothing, my dear Maupertuis," wrote the king, December 10, 1752; "the affair of the libels is finished. I have spoken out so plainly to the man, I have washed his head so thoroughly, that I do not believe he will repeat the offense. I have frightened him on the side of the purse, and it has had all the effect I expected. I have declared to him plumply that my house is to be a sanctuary, and not a retreat for brigands and scoundrels to distil poisons in."

¹ 22 Œuvres de Frédéric, 302.

He little knew his man. Scarcely had he slept in the capital of his kingdom than word was brought to him that the "Diatribes of Doctor Akakia" was for sale in the Berlin book-stores; an edition having been printed in Leipsic or Dresden simultaneously with that of Potsdam. The sensation was unspeakable! The empty and pompous Maupertuis was not beloved in Berlin; and many loyal Prussians secretly chuckled at the Diatribe who did not publicly commend it. Measures had been taken by the author to have copies so widely distributed in the city that some of them would be likely to escape the most vigilant pursuit. The respectable Formey, Protestant clergyman, perpetual secretary to the Berlin Academy, opponent and friend of Voltaire, received the first copy, on which *some one* had written,

"Quidquid delirant reges, plectentur Achivi;"

implying that when kings lose their senses it goes hard with the people. The prudent Formey tells us that he shuddered as he read the Diatribe, and carefully put his copy away without showing it to a single person, foreseeing what must follow. His precaution was fruitless. The next post brought more copies; not enough for the demand, and they commanded a great price.¹ One copy, however, of such a work will suffice for a large circle, and in a few days the court and society of Berlin were bursting with the comicalities of Akakia. The author himself was a little alarmed at what he had done, — such a difference is there between a singed manuscript in a closet and a printed pamphlet that convulses every idle inhabitant of a large city, and makes great companies of polite people scream with laughter. What would the king do? was a serious question for Voltaire at this time.

"As I have not," he wrote to Madame Denis, December 18, 1752, "a hundred and fifty thousand mustachios in my service, I do not in the least pretend to make war. I only think to desert becomingly, to take care of my health, to see you again, to forget this dream of three years. I see plainly that the orange has been squeezed; it is necessary now to think of saving the rind. . . . The puzzle is how to get away from here. I can ask leave only on the ground of my health, but there is no way of saying that I am going to the waters of Plombières

¹ Souvenirs d'un Citoyen, par Formey, page 270.

in the month of December. There is here a kind of minister of the Holy Gospel named P  rard, a Frenchman like myself. He asked permission to go to France on private business. The king had an answer sent him that the king knew his private business better than he did himself, and that he had no need to go to Paris."

A few days after, on Sunday afternoon, December 24, 1752, Collini, Voltaire's secretary, saw from his window some strange proceedings in the street near their lodgings. It proved to be the public burning of a book by the hands of the executioner, with ceremonies not unlike those which so frequently advertised interesting works in Paris during that century. Collini, being an Italian, did not understand the performance, and told Voltaire what was going on under the windows of his abode. "I'll bet," said he, "it is my Doctor they are burning." It was his Doctor. At three public places in the city of Berlin the Diatribe was burned that Sunday. Collini continues, "Soon after the execution the Marquis d'Argens and the Abb   de Prades called; perhaps sent by the king, that he might learn how Voltaire took it. Doubtless he felt the insult. Mere jests, he thought, ought not to provoke a defamatory act, and one usually accompanied by an arrest. Nevertheless, strong in conscious rectitude, and sure that he had committed no crime, he ended by making a joke of the execution; but he was more than ever resolved to leave the country."

Maupertuis was solaced. "This act," he wrote a day or two after, "which is much more infamous here than in France, was done by the king's express order, with the great applause of all respectable people; and you could see persons coming in carriages from every direction to warm themselves by that fire. The same evening the king wrote me a charming letter, and sent me the ashes of that Diatribe as a cooling powder." The official paper of Berlin, in its next number, had the following: "Sunday, at noon, a horrible pamphlet, entitled, 'The Diatribe,' etc., was burned publicly in different places by the hand of the executioner. M. de Voltaire is said to be the author of it."

This paragraph was copied into the other gazettes of Europe as a personal item of much interest that could be inserted

without danger. Not one of them informed the public of the effect of this flaming advertisement: "Ten presses in Germany, in January, 1753, printing Akakia day and night!" "Six thousand copies of Akakia sold in Paris in one day," "thirty thousand" in a few weeks! For the moment, and within the court circle of Berlin, Maupertuis was a kind of victor in the controversy, and Voltaire was held to be "in the king's disgrace!" Frederic visited the president at his own Noah's ark, where he doubtless cast a gracious glance at the parrots, and, as we know, poured abundant oil upon the wounded self-love of their master.

The Christmas gayeties followed. On New Year's Day Voltaire sent the king a package containing what he termed a New Year's gift, the cross of his order and the key appertaining to his dignity of royal chamberlain, with a letter, all respect and devotion, resigning his office and announcing his intended return to France. The tears and solicitations of his family, he said, induced him to lay at the king's feet the distinctions and benefits with which he had been honored. Upon the outside of the parcel inclosing these trinkets, which he sealed himself, he wrote the well-known lines:—

" Je les reçus avec tendresse,
Je vous les rends avec douleur;
C'est ainsi qu'un amant, dans son extrême ardeur,
Rend le portrait de sa maîtresse."¹

Secretary Collini, who looked on and saw the packet prepared and directed, relates what followed:—

"Young Francheville [son of his host] was charged to go and deliver this packet at the palace, and to give it to M. Fredersdorff, to whom Voltaire at the same time wrote a note, asking him to place the packet in the king's hands. This Fredersdorff was a kind of secretary to the monarch, who united in himself offices the most incongruous. He was at once secretary, steward, *valet de chambre*, master of the household, cup-bearer, and butler. The same day, in the afternoon, a carriage stopped before our door. It was Fredersdorff, who came from the king to bring back the cross of the order and the key of the chamberlain. There was a long conference between them. I was in the next room, and I gathered from some exclamations that it was only after a very animated discussion that Voltaire made up his mind to retain the presents which were now restored to him."

¹ I received them with tenderness, I give them back with pain. It is so that a lover, in his extreme ardor, gives back the portrait of his mistress.

Their return was in truth more embarrassing than agreeable. It increased the difficulty of his getting away without making of the King of Prussia an active enemy, who could render his peaceful settlement anywhere on the continent of Europe impossible. Politics were already converging towards the Seven Years' War, in which even Pennsylvania was to be involved within three years. What king, what emperor, would not be willing to oblige a possible ally by annoying or excluding a fugitive poet? The same evening, soon after Fredersdorff's departure, the restored chamberlain wrote to the king a letter, in which his embarrassment was expressed in the court jargon of the period:—

“M. Fredersdorff, who has been to console me in my disgrace, has given me hopes that your majesty will deign to hear in my favor the goodness of your character, and that you will repair by your benevolence, if it is possible, the opprobrium with which you have overwhelmed me. It is very certain that the unhappiness of having displeased you is not the least evil that I experience. But how am I to appear,—how live? I know not. I ought to be dead with grief. In this horrible condition, it is for your humanity to have pity on me. What do you wish should become of me? What do you wish me to do? I know not. I only know that you have attached me to yourself these sixteen years past. Dispose of a life which I have consecrated to you, and the end of which you have rendered so bitter. You are good, you are indulgent; I am the most unfortunate man in your dominions; command my destiny.”

The next morning (January 2, 1753), the king wrote a friendly and even cordial reply, which has not been preserved. Voltaire responded in a similar spirit; but, without again sending back his cross and key, he persisted in asking the king to accept his resignation, and to permit him henceforward to be bound only by affection and respect. Toward the end of January, when the king returned to Potsdam, matters were so far restored that he invited Voltaire to resume his old quarters in the château. He did not go to Potsdam, alleging ill-health; and he really was unfit for even so short a journey. He took care, however, to notify Europe of the invitation through the gazettes. “We learn by several letters from Berlin that M. de Voltaire, gentleman-in-ordinary of the chamber to the King of France, having remitted to his Prussian majesty his order,

his chamberlain's key, and whatever was due to him of his pensions, his Prussian majesty has not only returned them all, but has signified his desire that M. de Voltaire should follow him to Potsdam, and occupy his usual rooms in the palace." Having secured the insertion of these lines in the newspapers, he remained at Berlin, assiduously preparing for his departure, and discussing plans with Collini for their escape. He longed for the return of spring that he might begin his journey, and about the first of March he asked leave of absence to visit Plombières, a French watering-place then in high favor, and situated at a safe distance from Berlin. No answer came. He was impatient; he now held Prussia, as he wrote to Madame Denis, "in horror;" he paid diligent court to the French ambassador, not allowing him to forget that he was gentleman-in-ordinary to the King of France. Collini gives us an amusing view of his life at this time, uncertain whether he was to depart with or without the king's consent. Depart he would; upon that point alone he was unalterably determined.

"As soon as he felt himself well enough to support the fatigues of a journey, he asked permission of the king to go and drink the waters of Plombières, which the doctors had advised for his erysipelas. He remained some time without receiving a positive answer, which made him very uneasy. On the last day of February he had a particular conversation with me. He told me he was preparing to leave the house of M. de Francheville, and had already informed the father that he could not keep his son in his service any longer. The reason he had given was that, intending to go to Plombières for his health, he was unwilling to take away one of the king's subjects, which might displease his majesty. 'My real motive,' he added, 'is that I do not wish near me this young man, who will be less one of my secretaries than an agent to keep Berlin informed of all my proceedings. You alone will accompany me.' He charged me at the same time with the duty of making all the expenditures necessary for a sort of household we were going to set up, for which he advanced me a suitable sum of money. Until then his expenses had been defrayed by the king. Thus I was employed at once in writing under his dictation, in copying his corrected works, and in providing for the needs of a household which was about to become wandering.

"March 5th, I was very busy. Voltaire had with him many books that belonged to the king's library; these he told me to find and return, which I did. Then I put his papers in order, and had his things

packed. That very day we left M. de Francheville's house, which was in the centre of Berlin, and we removed to one far from there, in the Stralan quarter. It belonged to a great merchant named Schwejger, and its situation made it a kind of country house. We lived eleven days in that solitude. Our little household consisted of the master, a female cook, a man-servant, and myself, treasurer and director of the troupe. Notwithstanding his distance from the city, he received some visits. The Countess of Bentinet, that illustrious and genial woman, fit to govern an empire, was firmly attached to him, and often came to comfort him. Dr. Coste was also one of his friends, and lavished upon him all the resources of his art; it was he who advised the waters of Plombières. But the permission to depart did not arrive, and these delays caused Voltaire the greatest anxiety. He dreaded some fatal event; he feared a resolution had been taken to prevent his leaving Brandenburg. This apprehension tormented him, and made him still more impatient to get away.

“I went sometimes to walk with him in a large garden belonging to the house. When he wanted to be alone, he would say to me, ‘Now leave me to dream [*révasser*] a little.’ That was his expression, and he would continue his walk. One evening, in this garden, after having talked together upon his situation, he asked me if I knew how to drive a wagon drawn by two horses. I reflected upon it a moment, and, as I knew that his ideas must not be at once contradicted, I replied in the affirmative. ‘Listen,’ said he to me. ‘I have thought of a way to get out of this country. You can buy two horses. It will not, after that, be difficult to purchase a wagon. When we have horses it will not appear strange to make a provision of hay.’ ‘Very well, sir,’ said I; ‘what shall we do with a wagon, horses, and hay?’ ‘Why, this: We will fill the wagon with hay. In the middle of the hay we will put all our baggage. I will place myself, disguised, upon the hay, and give myself out for a Protestant pastor who is going to see one of his married daughters in the neighboring town. You will be my wagoner. We will follow the shortest road to the frontiers of Saxony, where we will sell wagon, horses, and hay; after that we will take the post for Leipsic.’ He could not keep from laughing in communicating to me this project, and he accompanied his account with a thousand gay and curious reflections. I answered him that I would do what he wanted, and that I was disposed to give him all proofs of devotion that depended upon me; but that, not knowing German, I should not be able to reply to the questions which would be asked me. Besides, not knowing very well how to drive, I could not answer for not upsetting my pastor into some ditch, which would grieve me much. We finished by laughing together over the scheme. He

did not much count upon realizing it; but he loved to imagine means of leaving a country where he regarded himself as a prisoner. 'My friend,' said he to me, 'if permission to go does not come in a little while, I will know some way or other of leaving the island of Alcina.' Since they had burned his book, he feared more than ever princes and nobles, and vaunted unceasingly the pleasure of living free and far from them."

Toward the middle of March the king, not yet suspecting the reality of his poet's desire to leave him, made an ill-timed advance toward reconciliation. He dictated the following to his new secretary, the Abbé de Prades, and caused it to be sent to Voltaire as a note from the secretary. The abbé, a familiar friend of Voltaire, grateful to him for various services, — owing to him his settlement in Prussia, — could be supposed to write in this jocular strain:—

"The king has held his consistory, and in that consistory it has been discussed whether your offense was a mortal or a venial sin. In truth, all the doctors have recognized that it was very mortal, and confirmed such by lapses and relapses. But, nevertheless, in the plenitude of the grace of Beelzebub, which rests upon his majesty, he believes himself able to absolve you, if not wholly, at least in part. This would naturally be, in truth, in consequence of some act of contrition and imposed penance; but as, in the empire of Satan, much deference is paid to genius, I believe that, in consideration of your talents, faults can be pardoned which bring reproach upon your disposition. These are the words of the sovereign Pontiff, which I have recorded with care. It is rather a prophecy."¹

Voltaire's reply to the abbé was far from being such as the king expected. It was written March 15th.

"DEAR ABBÉ,—Your style did not appear to me agreeable. You are quite the secretary of state; but I notify you that I must embrace you before my departure. I shall not be able to kiss you, for my lips are too much swollen by my devil of a disease [erysipelas]. You will easily do without my kisses, but not, I pray you, without my warm and sincere friendship. I confess to you that I am in despair at leaving you and at leaving the king; but it is a thing indispensable. Consult with the dear marquis, with Fredersdorff, *pardieu*, with the king himself, how you can manage so that I may have the consolation of seeing him before my departure. I wish it absolutely; I wish to embrace with my two arms the abbé and the marquis. The marquis [D'Ar-

¹ 22 Œuvres de Frédéric, 307.

gens] will be no more kissed than you, nor the king either; but I shall be much moved. I am weak; I am a soft-hearted chicken. I shall behave absurdly: no matter; I wish once more to bid farewell to you two. If I do not throw myself at the feet of the king, the waters of Plombières will kill me. I await your response to leave this country as a fortunate or unfortunate man. Reckon upon me as long as you live."

For such a rejection of a jocular advance to be extremely disagreeable it was not necessary for the suitor to be a king. Frederic was acutely wounded by it. He dashed upon paper an outline of the reply which he wished to be drawn up in the king's name by the new secretary. The paper is still preserved in the archives of the Prussian court.

"That he can leave this service whenever he wishes; that he has no need to employ the pretext of the waters of Plombières, but that he will have the goodness, before setting out, to return to me the contract of his engagement, the key, the cross, and the volume of poems which I have confided to him; that I wish he and Koenig had attacked only my works; that I sacrifice them with good-will to those who desire to blacken the reputation of others; that I have not the folly and vanity of authors, and that the cabals of men of letters appear to me to be the last degree of baseness."

The Abbé de Prades put these ideas into form, and sent the letter to Voltaire March 16th. But such a *congé* would not answer the purposes of the deserter; for a king then had arms that could reach far beyond the boundaries of his own kingdom, as Voltaire was soon to know. Other correspondence followed; the king wrote in a friendlier tone, hinting that, if waters were necessary, there were excellent waters nearer than those of Plombières.

On the 18th of March, the king sent the required leave of absence, and an intimation to the invalid that he would be glad to see him at Potsdam before his departure. Without the loss of a moment, the traveling carriage was packed and the last preparations were made. On the same day Voltaire and his secretary went to Potsdam, arriving at seven in the evening, and occupied once more their familiar quarters in the palace. The next day, after dinner, the parades and other kingly duties being done, Voltaire and Frederic were closeted together in the king's office for the space of two hours.

These two men, apart from the difference in rank between them, were master and pupil, a relation that can be among the most amiable and tender which human beings know. Voltaire had awakened the intellect of the prince years before they began to correspond, and to him Frederic owed a great part of his mental culture. They had been like lovers together in this château of Potsdam; and, despite their differences, each had still for the other an unexpended balance of affection. Face to face once more in a familiar room, the old feelings revived. The king, as we may infer from his own letters, tried again to justify the support he had given Maupertuis in that precipitate iniquity of his toward a brother *savan*. "You ought to remember," the king wrote to Voltaire a year later, "that, when you came to take leave of me at Potsdam, I assured you that I was willing to forget all that had passed, provided you would give me your word to do nothing more against Maupertuis." This is all we really know of what passed between them, except that their friendship seemed to live again in all its warmth, and that the king expected his happy return as soon as he had finished with the waters of Plombières. It was only *a leave of absence*, let us remember, that Voltaire had asked and received, — not a dismissal from the king's service.

"Their interview," continues Collini, "lasted two hours; two months had passed since they had seen each other. When Voltaire reappeared, he had so satisfied an air, it was easy to judge that peace was restored. In fact, I learned from him that Frederic had entirely returned to confidence and friendship, and that Maupertuis himself had been in some sallies immolated to their reconciliation."

Six days Voltaire now passed at Potsdam, fêted and caressed by the king and court, supping every evening in the jovial and familiar old way. The king hoped the journey would be given up, but Voltaire, to whom these gay repasts were, as he styled them, "suppers of Damocles," only watched a favorable moment for taking leave. On the 26th of March, the king being about to start upon his tour of the posts in Silesia, he was holding the last parade of his regiment at nine o'clock in the morning. It was now or never with the deserter. He went to the parade ground. "Here, sire, is M. de Voltaire," said an officer, "who comes to receive your majesty's orders."

The king turned toward him, and said, "Very well, M. de Voltaire, you absolutely wish, then, to set out?" To which the traveler replied, "Sire, indispensable affairs, and, above all, my health, oblige me to do so." The king said, "Monsieur, I wish you a good journey."¹ And so they parted, never to meet again.

From the parade ground he hurried back to the château, where everything was in readiness for instant departure. Dreading some after-thought of the king that might yet frustrate or detain him, he would not stop even to take leave of his comrades, with whom he had lived familiarly and cordially. He had written a few lines of school-boy farewell to them, although he addressed the note to the Marquis d'Argens:—

"Brother, I bid you good-by; I separate from you with regret. Your brother conjures you, as he sets out, to repel the assaults of the demon, who may desire to do during my absence what he has not been able to accomplish while we lived together: he has not been able to sow discord between us. I hope that, with the grace of the Lord, brother Gaillard [Abbé de Prades] will not let it come near his field. I recommend myself to your prayers and to his. Raise your hearts to God, my dear brothers, and shut your ears to the discourses of men. Live united, and always love your brother."

He had now done with the Prussian court. Let Collini relate his departure.

"We passed [records the secretary] part of the night of the 23d of March together. He gave me several bags of money, charged me to go the next day to Berlin, accompanied by a servant, and carry them to a banker, and get for him letters of credit. I executed that commission, and returned to Potsdam on the morning of the 25th. It was on the next day that Voltaire took leave of the king, at an early hour, and got immediately afterwards into the traveling carriage which I had caused to be prepared for him, and started on the road to Leipsic. Leaving Potsdam at nine in the morning of the 26th of March, 1753, we reached Leipsic (ninety-two miles distant) at six in the evening of the 27th. . . . The vehicle in which we made the journey was his own; it was a traveling carriage, large, commodious, well hung, abundantly furnished with pockets and compartments. The latter were filled with two portmanteaus, and the former with valises. Upon the front seat outside were placed two

¹ 2 Souvenirs de Vingt Ans de Séjour à Berlin, par D. Thiebault, 348.

servants, of whom one was from Potsdam and served as a copyist. Four post-horses, and sometimes six, according to the nature of the roads, were harnessed to the carriage. These details are nothing in themselves, but they serve to show the manner of traveling of a man of letters, who had known how to create for himself a fortune equal to his reputation. Voltaire and I occupied the interior of the carriage with two or three portfolios, which contained the manuscripts he most valued, and a cash-box, wherein were his gold, his letters of exchange, and his most precious effects. It was in this style that we journeyed through Germany. Accordingly, at every post-house and inn we were accosted and received at the gate with all the respect that is shown to opulence. Here it was M. the *Baron de Voltaire*; there, M. the *Count* or M. the *Chamberlain*; and nearly everywhere it was *his Excellency* who arrived. I still have some bills of landlords headed, For *his Excellency M. the Count de Voltaire*, with secretary and suite. All these scenes amused the philosopher, who despised those titles upon which vanity is pleased to nourish itself, and we laughed at them together heartily. Nor was it from vanity that he traveled in this manner. Already old and sickly, he loved and has always loved the conveniences of life. He was very rich, and made a noble use of his fortune. Those who have wished to make Voltaire pass for a miser knew him very little. He had with regard to money the same principle as for time: it was necessary, according to him, *to economize in order to be liberal.*"

On reaching Leipsic, which is about seven miles from the Prussian frontier, he did not go to an inn, but to a suite of rooms which he had caused to be hired for him in advance. He was a Prussian no more, and he meant to remain several days at Leipsic, as if to enjoy his new freedom. Already that city was one of the chief book marts of the world; what more natural than that the most prolific and popular author of the day should have some business to detain him there? Several presses at Leipsic were even then printing editions of the "Diatribes of Doctor Akakia, Physician to the Pope," so brilliantly advertised by a king not popular in Saxony. The appetite for Akakia seemed insatiable; and the author of the work could say with some truth that he had amused Europe at the expense of the president of the Berlin Academy. "When I am attacked," he wrote to Formey, just before leaving, "I defend myself like a devil; but I am a good devil, and I end by laughing."

CHAPTER X.

PARTING SHOTS AT MAUPERTUIS.

COLLINI speaks of two or three portfolios in the commodious traveling carriage, containing manuscripts which the author particularly valued. Among these was a continuation of the "Diatribes of Doctor Akakia;" written soon after the public burning in the streets of Berlin, on the day before Christmas. The new part of Akakia had, as there is reason to believe, been read to a few of the faithful in Berlin; and some inkling of the same had, as usual, escaped the chosen circle, and reached the ears both of the king and the president. Hence the promise exacted by Frederic that Voltaire would let Maupertuis alone; in other words, not add a supplement to the Diatribe.

This supplement was even more boisterously comic than the part already published. The Diatribe concluded, as the reader may remember, with some salutary advice given by the Inquisition to the young candidate, who had presumed to write under the name of an illustrious president. The new part began by saying that this benign treatment had produced an effect contrary to that expected by the faculty, as often happened. The bile of the native of St. Malo being exalted by it still more than his soul, he had pitilessly caused the prescription of the doctor to be *burned*, and the malady grew worse. He persisted in making experiments, and, to that end, held the Memorable Session, of which Doctor Akakia proceeds to render a faithful account. Here was another opportunity to *repeat* the familiar absurdities, with burlesque variations of the most mirth-provoking character. The president from his lofty chair opens the session by pronouncing the eulogy of a member who had recently *ripened*, that is, died, because the precaution had not been taken to stop his pores, and preserve him like a fresh egg, according to the new method. The experiments followed. Two doctors produced each a patient covered with pitch, and

two surgeons pierced their arms and legs with long needles. At once, the patients, who before could hardly move, began to run and roar with all their might; and the secretary entered the fact upon the records. Next, the apothecary drew near with a large vessel of laudanum, and placed it upon a volume written by the president, in order to double its effect, and gave a dose of it to a vigorous young man. Then, behold, to the great astonishment of every one present, he fell asleep, and in his sleep he had a happy dream, which alarmed the ladies who had come to this solemnity; and the nature of the soul was perfectly known, as Monsieur the President had very well divined. After several more experiments, the perpetual secretary concluded the session by a eulogy of the president, whose *monade* he exalted to the clouds, or, at least, to the fogs. Finally, a throne was constructed for the president, composed of bladders, from which he set out the next day for the moon.

Nor was this the end of it. A second supplement was written, in which there was a fourth ludicrous repetition of the old points. It began thus: "The native of St. Malo did not go to the moon, as was believed; he contented himself with barking at it. The good Doctor Akakia, seeing that the disease grew worse, thought, with some of his colleagues, to sweeten the acidity of the humors by reconciling the president with the Helvetian doctor, who had so much displeased him by showing him his *measure*." The treaty of peace follows, in nineteen articles, of such exquisite fun that, if Maupertuis had not been just the Maupertuis he was, he must have given in, and joined the rest of Europe in the roars of laughter which it elicited.

With these supplements in his portfolio, Voltaire found himself in Leipsic, on the 27th of March. He was much occupied at this period with refuting La Beaumelle, and was preparing to publish further evidence of the man's impudent, unconscious depravity. When he had passed a week at Leipsic, ever busy with this matter, which was to him, both as author and as man, of the most absorbing interest, he received a letter from Maupertuis, which had important results, even to the altering of his whole future:—

[Berlin, April 3, 1753.] "The gazettes say that you are detained, sick, at Leipsic; private information assures me that you are stopping there only to have new libels printed. For my part, I wish to give you certain information of my condition and of my intentions.

“I have never done anything against you, never written anything, never said anything. I have even found it unworthy of me to reply one word to all the impertinences which you have hitherto spread abroad; and I have preferred to ignore stories concerning M. de la Beaumelle, the disavowal of which I have in writing from himself, and a hundred other falsehoods which you have made public with the design to color your conduct toward me, rather than continue a contest so indecent. The justice which the king has done me against your writings, my sickness, and the slight value I attach to my works have hitherto combined to justify my indolence.

“But if it is true that your intention is to attack me again, and to attack me, as you have already done, by personalities, I declare to you that, instead of replying to you by writings, my health is sufficiently good to find you wherever you may be, and to wreak upon you vengeance the most complete.

“Render thanks to the respect and obedience which have hitherto held back my arm, and which have saved you from the most doleful *adventure* you have ever had.”

The last sentence of this letter alluded to humiliating events in the early life of Voltaire, of which his enemies were apt to remind him, but seldom with impunity. A new edition of Doctor Akakia speedily appeared, with the supplements, and with supplements added to the supplements, and appendages to them, all of the most diverting character. The gentle Akakia published part of the president's angry letter; but, instead of its last sentence, he substituted the single word “Tremble!” The reply of Doctor Akakia followed:—

[Leipsic, April 10, 1753.] “MR. PRESIDENT, — I have received the letter with which you honor me. You inform me that you are in good health, that your strength is entirely restored, and you threaten to come and assassinate me if I publish the letter of La Beaumelle. What ingratitude towards your poor Doctor Akakia! You are not content with ordering us not to pay the doctor; you wish to kill him! This procedure does not savor of a president of an Academy, nor of a good Christian, such as you are. I compliment you upon your good health; but I have not as much strength as you. I have been in bed fifteen days, and I beg you to defer the little experiment in physics which you wish to make. You desire, perhaps, to dissect me? But consider that I am not a giant of the southern hemisphere, and that my brain is so small that the examination of its fibre will not give you any notion of the soul. Besides, if you kill me, have the goodness to

remember that M. de la Beaumelle has promised to pursue me even to hell. He will not fail to go in quest of me there. Although the hole which is to be dug by your order to the centre of the earth, and which must lead straight to hell, is not yet begun, there are other means of going thither; and it will come to pass that I shall be abused in the other world, as you have persecuted me in this. Are you willing, monsieur, to carry animosity so far?

“Have the goodness to bear with me a little further. Little as you may wish to exalt your soul in order clearly to discern the future, you will perceive that, if you come to assassinate me at Leipsic, where you are not more beloved than elsewhere, and where your letter is deposited in evidence, you run some risk of being hanged; which would too much advance the moment of your maturity, and would not be becoming the president of an Academy. I advise you, before doing so, to have the letter of La Beaumelle declared, in one of your sessions, a forgery intended to diminish your glory; after which, it will be more permitted to you, perhaps, to kill me as a disturber of your self-love.

“For the rest, I am still very weak, and I should only be able to throw at your head my syringe and other objects of my bed-chamber; but as soon as I shall have gained a little strength, I shall have my pistols loaded *cum pulvere pyrio*,¹ and by multiplying the mass by the square of the rapidity, until the action and you will be reduced to zero, I shall put some lead into your brain. It appears to have need of it.

“It will be sad for you that the Germans, whom you have so much reviled, invented gunpowder, as you ought to lament that they invented printing. Adieu, my dear president.

“P. S. As there are from fifty to sixty people here who have taken the liberty to poke fun at you prodigiously, they ask on what day you intend to assassinate them.”

The good doctor, in terror, appealed for protection to the great and famous university:—

“Doctor Akakia, having fled to the university of Leipsic, where he has sought an asylum against the hostile attempts of a Laplauder, native of St. Malo, who absolutely designs to come and assassinate him in the arms of the said university, urgently entreats messieurs the doctors and scholars to arm themselves against this barbarian with their inkhorns and penknives. He addresses himself particularly to his brother physicians. He hopes that they will relieve the said savage, as soon as he shall appear, of all his peccant humors, and that they will preserve by their skill what may remain of reason to this

¹ Gunpowder.

cruel Laplander, and of life to their brother, the good Akakia, who commends himself to their care. He entreats messieurs the apothecaries not to forget him on this occasion."

Besides this, he drew up an advertisement, in the name of the university, warning the public to be on their guard:—

"A Certain Person having written a letter to an inhabitant of Leipsic, in which he threatens the said inhabitant with assassination, and assassination being evidently contrary to the privileges of the fair, we pray all and each to give information of the said Certain Person when he shall present himself at the gates of Leipsic. He is a philosopher, who walks in a manner composed of the air distracted and the air precipitate; the eye round and small, and the peruke the same; the nose flattened, the physiognomy bad; having the countenance full, and a mind full of himself; always carrying a scalpel in his pocket, with which to dissect people of high stature. Whoever shall give information of him shall have a reward of a thousand ducats in the funds of the Latin city which the aforesaid Certain Person is having built, or from the first comet of gold or diamond, which is to fall immediately upon the earth, according to the predictions of the said philosopher and assassin."

Finally, he sent, or pretended to send, all these documents to the secretary of the Berlin Academy, with the letter subjoined:—

"MONSIEUR LE SECRÉTAIRE ÉTERNEL,—I send you the sentence of death which the president has pronounced against me, with my appeal to the public, and the testimonials of protection which all the doctors and all the apothecaries of Leipsic have given me. You see that the president does not limit himself to experiments in the southern hemisphere, and that he absolutely wishes in the northern to separate my soul from my body. It is the first time that a president has desired to kill one of his counselors. Is that the principle of the least action? What a terrible man is this president! Here he declares a man a forger, there he assassinates; and he proves the existence of God by a plus b divided by z . Truly his parallel has never been seen. I have made, monsieur, one little reflection: it is that when the president shall have killed, dissected, and buried me it will be necessary to pronounce my eulogium at the Academy, according to the laudable custom. If it is he who undertakes it, he will be not a little embarrassed. We know that he was so with that of the late Marshall Schmettan, to whom he had given some pain in his life-time. If it is you, monsieur, who pronounce my funeral oration, you will be quite

as much hindered as another. You are a priest, and I am a layman; you are a Calvinist, and I am a Papist; you are an author, and I am one also; you are in good health, and I am a physician. Therefore, monsieur, in order to avoid the funeral oration, and to put every one at his ease, permit me to die by the cruel hand of the president, and scratch me from the number of your elect. You must feel also that, being condemned to death by his decree, I should be first degraded. Erase me, then, monsieur, from your list; put me with the *forger* Koenig, who had the misfortune to be in the right. I patiently await death with that criminal.

. . . . 'Pariterque jacentes
Ignovere diis.'

(Phars. ii. 93.)

"I am, metaphysically, monsieur, your very humble and very obedient servant,

AKAKIA.

Thus the Diatribe ended, making altogether a pamphlet of more than fifty pages. The burlesque letters raised its popularity to the highest point, and remained part of the common stock of fun available for journalism during the rest of that century. They were translated into many languages; and parts of them may be found afloat in periodicals as late as 1780. The author was detained nearly a month at Leipsic; but the president of the Berlin Academy did not improve the chance to come and execute his threat. He had his revenge; nor was it long delayed; but it was wreaked by a more powerful hand than his own.

During this stay at Leipsic, as during much of this year, Voltaire was engaged in defending his "Louis XIV." against the notes of La Beaumelle. This task he performed, not in the light manner of Akakia, nor in the tone of his replies to Desfontaines, but seriously, earnestly, and at length. "We have always thought," he once remarked, "that it is not necessary to reply to critics when the point is merely one of taste. You find 'La Henriade' bad; compose a better one. 'Zaire,' 'Mérope,' 'Mahomet,' 'Tancrède,' appear ridiculous to you; I do not object. As to history, it is another thing. The author accused of error in a date, a fact, is bound either to correct it if he is wrong, or prove it if he is right. It is permitted to weary the public; it is not permitted to deceive it." La Beaumelle's possession of the letters of Madame Maintenon had given him misleading glimpses behind the scenes; Voltaire, in his refuta-

tion, shows that he had lived behind the scenes, and conversed familiarly with actors in that gorgeous drama. To break down the testimony of Cardinal de Fleury, which Voltaire had frequently cited, the critic endeavored to prove that the cardinal did not like Voltaire. "I have nowhere said that he liked me," was his reply. Nevertheless, it was the cardinal from whom he had derived the fact that M. de Bâville, intendant of Languedoc, was the prime instigator of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. "I asked the cardinal if Louis XIV. had been well grounded in his religion, for which he showed so great zeal. He replied to me in these self-same words: 'He had the faith of a charcoal-burner.'"

La Beaumelle had taunted the author of the "Age of Louis XIV." with his wealth, "as if that pretended wealth had been gained at his expense." In reply to this, he drew a picture of poor authors groveling every day before a rich ignoramus, incensing him from the lower end of his table, and abasing themselves before him for self-abasement's sake. "They are not jealous of *him*; they think him of a nature superior to their own. But let a man of letters be elevated above them by fortune and places, and even those who have received benefits from his hands carry their envy of him even to fury. Virgil in easy circumstances was calumniated by Mevius."

In the "Pucelle," upon which he had been occasionally working this year, he did not forget the outrage of which he had been the victim at the hands of this man. La Beaumelle figures, in the eighteenth canto, as one of the chain gang going to the galleys, along with a priest who confessed and plundered the dying, and with another priest who confessed and betrayed young nuns.

"Pour le dernier de la noble sequelle,
C'est mon soutien, c'est mon cher La Beaumelle.
De dix gredins qui m'ont vendu leur voix,
C'est le plus bas, mais c'est le plus fidèle;
Esprit distrait, on prétend que parfois,
Tout occupé de ses œuvres chrétiennes,
Il prend d'autrui les poches pour les siennes."¹

¹ For the last of the noble gang, it is my support, my dear La Beaumelle. Of ten blackguards who have sold me their votes, he is the lowest, but the most faithful; a spirit distraught, they say, that sometimes, all absorbed in his Christian works, takes other people's pockets for his own. (La Pucelle, canto 18, line 182.)

Poets then appended abundant notes to their works. Voltaire, following Pope's example in the "Dunciad," after he had pierced an enemy in his text, left him impaled and labeled in his notes. In the note on this passage, besides giving an outline of La Beaumelle's career, brief and blasting, he excuses his mention of so many insignificant libelers. Some friends, he remarks, have advised him to pay no attention to such people, but let them rail on. "We do not think so," he replies; "we believe that it is necessary to punish ragamuffins when they are insolent and rascally, and especially when they are tedious. Such details, which are but too true, ought to be published, like handbills on the street corners describing malefactors."

He returns to this idea many times. Elsewhere he says, "What happens when such a work [as La Beaumelle's edition of "Louis XIV.,"] appears? Young countrymen, young foreigners, ask for the 'Age of Louis XIV.' at a bookseller's. The bookseller inquires if they wish the edition with learned notes. The buyer replies that he wishes by all means the work complete. The edition of La Beaumelle is handed to him. The givers of advice say to you, 'Despise that infamy; the author is not worth mention.' Pleasant advice, truly! It is the same as saying that imposture must be allowed to triumph. No; it must be made known."¹

This traveler did well to bring with him for his tour through Germany a copyist and a valet, as well as a secretary; for we perceive that he had abundant work for all of them. At Leipsic he found awaiting him the mass of his effects sent from Potsdam and Berlin by wagon; and, while he was writing letters, composing *Akasia*, reading proof, and accumulating evidence of his historical correctness, his servants were packing books in cases, and his secretary was putting his papers in order. Among his books was a volume of the King of Prussia's poems, given him by the king, of which only a very small number of copies had been printed for distribution among the king's most trusted friends. These poems, as the reader has seen, owed many a bright touch and happy couplet to the hand of the royal poet's master. In some of these poems, Frederic had written of contemporaries with the free-

¹ Les Honnêtetés Littéraires. 36 Œuvres, 238.

dom of a man who has an army at his orders. The volume was now packed, with a quantity of other books, in a large case, and the whole mass of effects were given in charge to a merchant of Leipsic, who agreed to forward them to Strasbourg, the nearest French city. His niece, Madame Denis, was coming from Paris to Strasbourg to meet him, and there they would consult as to their future movements.

The author's presence in Leipsic was an event of much note. He was not wanting to the occasion. Busy as he was, he found time to pay his respects to the learned professors of the University, and to visit the beautiful and famous gardens of the neighborhood. After a stay of twenty-three days, the commodious traveling carriage was again brought round, and M. le Comte de Voltaire, with secretary and suite, resumed his journey.

CHAPTER XI.

A HAPPY MONTH AT GOTHA.

GOTHA, the capital of the Duchy of Saxe-Gotha, about a hundred miles southwest of Leipsic, was his next halting-place. Here he alighted at an inn ; but he had scarcely done so when an invitation came from the reigning duke and duchess to take up his abode at their château, near by. He had been in correspondence with the Duchess of Saxe-Gotha when he was studying history with Madame du Châtelet at Cirey, and had even sent her a manuscript of part of his General History, which she still possessed. He accepted the invitation, and was at once established in the château, with "his secretary and suite."

A month of enchantment followed. The ducal palace, now so renowned for its galleries, its collections, its library of two hundred thousand volumes, its precious and unique manuscripts, was already one of the most richly provided and famous residences of Germany. The reigning family was related to that of Weimar, a day's ride distant, a family forever interesting and familiar to the educated portion of our race through Goethe's long connection with it. The Duchess of Saxe-Gotha reminds us of Goethe's Duchess of Weimar, and she received Voltaire as gracious ladies do receive men who have instructed them. A woman never wields such power and fascination as when she is at the head of a great establishment like this, and is worthy to be at the head of it. She is then the illustrious housekeeper, and all the nobler attributes both of the woman and the princess have free scope. The duchess was in the prime of life, forty-three years of age, and she had gathered about her a little court of free and congenial spirits. What readings ! what suppers ! what pastimes ! Never was a poet more caressed ; and he, on his part, opened all his portfolios, and read the choicest of their contents. The poem on "Natural

Religion," written in Prussia, he read to the evening circle with such success as we can imagine. With greater applause he read new cantos of "La Pucelle." History was much spoken of between Voltaire and the duchess, particularly the "Age of Louis XIV." and the pirate edition of the same by La Beaumelle, whose escapade at Gotha with the thieving governess was fresh in every one's recollection. While speaking of history, she lamented that there was no popular account of the German empire since Charlemagne, a period during which her own ancestors had been conspicuous. Her son, heir to a duchy that cast a vote in the imperial congress, was growing up in ignorance of the history of the empire of which he was to be a part.

Like a true knight, Voltaire engaged to produce such a work for her boy's convenience and her own; and, at once, with that impetuosity of which Collini has spoken, he began his "Annals of the Empire since Charlemagne," well styled by Collini "the most methodical and the most painful of all of his works." The château contained treasures of information on this subject. Collini and the copyist knew no rest. During a great part of the thirty-five days of his stay at Gotha, Voltaire kept them busy enough, copying, searching, and writing under his dictation. Few knights in the ages of chivalry ever redeemed a vow with so much patient toil as this author expended upon these Annals, a work from which he could derive neither glory nor profit: a thousand printed pages of fact and outline, mere dates, names and events, a catalogue of crimes, foibles, and misfortunes, with scarcely any of those details upon which the interest of the reader so much depends. Much of it was the kind of "history" supposed to be suited to the young, as bones and skeletons are useful to medical students. But, catalogue as it is, it was done by Voltaire, and there is hardly a page wherein there is not a trace of the intelligent and humane mind. Occasionally there is a passage, and even a chapter, of the true Voltaire. At the end of the work, mindful of a boy's infirmity, he not only gives lists of all the emperors, popes, and electors of the nine centuries which he had traversed, but summarizes each century in rhyme, to assist the memory. This is the rhyme of the ninth century:—

NEUVIÈME SIÈCLE.

" Charlemagne en huit cent renouvelle l'Empire,
 Fait couronner son fils ; en quatorze il expire.
 Louis, en trente-trois par des prêtres jugé,
 D'un sac de pénitent dans Soissons est chargé :
 Rétabli, toujours faible, il expire en quarante.
 Lothaire est moine à Prum, cinq ans après cinquante.
 On perd après vingt ans le second des Louis :
 Le Chauve lui succède, et meurt au Mont-Cenis.
 Le Bègue, fils du Chauve, a l'Empire une année.
 Le Gros, soumis au pape, ô dure destinée !
 En l'an quatre-vingt-sept dans Trebur déposé,
 Cède au bâtard Arnoul son trône méprisé.
 Arnoul, sacré dans Rome ainsi qu'en Lombardie,
 Finit avec le siècle en quittant l'Italie."

Each century has its summary, ending with the eighteenth, still incomplete : —

DIX-HUITIÈME SIÈCLE.

" Léopold, délivré du fer des Ottomans,
 Expire en sept cent cinq ; et Joseph l'an onzième.
 Charles six en quarante ; et le sang des Lorrains
 S'unit au sang d'Autriche, au trône des Germains."

The Duchess of Saxe-Gotha, in tempting him to undertake this monotonous labor, rendered him a service, since it was a kind of work which he could do in such troublous times as were before him. It could amuse an anxious and quiet an excited mind. During all the rest of this year, and part of the next, he had these Annals to fall back upon when he could do little else, — an agreeable resource, too, which led him to several pleasant places, and introduced him to many learned men. It was a task in which he could be constantly aided by others, and which kept a cheerful bustle of work around him.

Many mementos of this visit occur in his works, and some adorned his abode to the end of his days. The collection of coins and medals in the château was, even then, one of the finest in Germany, and the duchess gave him some duplicates for his cabinet. Among the little poems which he addressed to her was one written on her recovery from an indisposition soon after : —

A MADAME LA DUCHESSE DE SAXE-GOTHA.

“ Grand Dieu, qui rarement fais naître parmi nous
 De graces, de vertus, cet heureux assemblage,
 Quand ce chef-d'œuvre est fait, sois un peu plus jaloux
 De conserver un tel ouvrage :
 Fais naître en sa faveur un éternel printemps ;
 Etends dans l'avenir ses belles destinées,
 Et raconteis les jours des sots et des méchants
 Pour ajouter à ses années.”¹

The most delightful visits come to an end. May 25th, the poet bade farewell to the duchess and her court, and the great carriage, with heavier portfolios and more books than before, rumbled again along the German roads toward Frankfort-on-the-Main, more than a hundred miles further on the way to Strasbourg. Other princes invited him, and he halted for a night or two to visit them. Collini relates an amusing incident of this part of their journey. They left the château of the Landgrave of Hesse, at Wabern, on the 30th of May, in the morning, and reached Marbourg the same evening.

“ The next day [says Collini], we had scarcely gone a league when Voltaire ordered the postilion to stop. He took snuff, and could not find, either in his pockets or in the carriage, the gold snuff-box which he ordinarily used. He did not show, on this occasion, the uneasiness which would have agitated a man over-fond of money ; the box, nevertheless, was of great value. We held counsel upon the spot, without leaving the carriage. Voltaire believed he had left this snuff-box in the post-house at Marbourg. To send a servant or the postilion, on horseback, to seek for it was to run the risk of never seeing it again. I offer myself to make the journey on foot ; he accepts, and I am off like an arrow. I arrive out of breath ; I enter the post-house ; everything is quiet there. I mount, without being seen, to the room in which Voltaire had slept, which was open. Nothing on the commode, nothing on the tables or on the bed. Beside this last piece of furniture was a night-table, covered by a fold of the curtain ; I raise it, and I perceive the snuff-box. To possess myself of it, to descend the stairs, and to leave the house is but the work of a moment. I run to rejoin the carriage, as happy as Jason after the conquest of the golden fleece. This trinket, of great value, was one of

¹ Great God, who rarely causest to be born among us this happy union of graces and virtues, be a little more jealous to preserve such a work ; create for her an eternal spring ; extend into the future her beautiful destiny ; and cut short the days of the foolish and the wicked in order to add to her years.

those gifts that princes lavished upon Voltaire as testimonials of their esteem ; it was doubly precious. My illustrious traveling companion received it with pleasure, but also with the moderation of disinterestedness. He appeared to me more affected by the trouble that I had taken than happy to recover his snuff-box."

Continuing their journey, stopping only to visit the salt springs of Friedeberg, they reached Frankfort the same evening, May 31st, about eight o'clock. He took lodgings for the night at the Golden Lion inn, intending to resume his journey homeward early the next morning. He might well have planned to remain a while in this free city, not yet annexed to Prussia. Here was the ancient Council House in which the emperors of Germany were elected, and it contained portraits of them and other objects of historic interest, worthy the notice of an author engaged upon the "Annals of the Empire." The mighty Charlemagne had been in the city, and a spot whereon he once had stood was marked by an edifice which the boy Goethe could not pass without reverentially saluting. That wondrous boy was then nearly four years of age. Perhaps, already, he had thrown his mother's crockery out of the window ; perhaps witnessed the performance of those immortal puppets that affected him so deeply. He had no recollection in after-life of this visit of Voltaire to his native place, the noise of which filled the world. But his father never forgot it, and often used the incidents about to be related to warn his son against accepting the favor of princes.

CHAPTER XII.

ARREST AND DETENTION AT FRANKFORT.

WHEN Voltaire awoke at the Golden Lion on the 1st of June, 1753, more than two months had passed since he had taken leave of the King of Prussia on the parade ground at Potsdam. He had traveled leisurely in the pleasant spring weather, through some territories in which the influence of Frederic was not greatly inferior to that of a sovereign over tributary princes; but, so far as he yet knew, the king had taken no cognizance of his proceedings at Leipsic.

All Germany was laughing at Maupertuis; even the king's own sisters, and every member of his court who had any sense of the ludicrous. The Berlin Academy, too, so dear to the king, had its share of ridicule. And here was the author of the Diatribe traversing Germany triumphant, entertained and fêted by princesses. But during this long and brilliant progress a trap had been set for the culprit on the road by which he meant to reach Strasbourg. He was at length *in* the trap. He was caged in the Golden Lion; and, as he was getting ready for an early start that morning, his captors were coming to seize him.

The wrath of the king was violent against him in those early days of April, when the supplements to Akakia were coming from Leipsic, a city near his territories, but not of his inclining. A few hours must have made it plain that the fugitive was gone never to return. His retreat had been artfully managed; but he was gone, bag and baggage, and had even concealed the direction of his ulterior flight. The world-famous friendship between a great king and a great author was broken; Frederic had lost Voltaire, whom he had won only after a passionate, assiduous courtship of years. From his safe halting place of Leipsic he seemed to be hurling back defiance at the king. First may have come the ludicrous reply

to Maupertuis's threatening letter ; then, probably, the advertisement warning the public against a certain philosopher and assassin, which Collini assures us was actually inserted in a Leipsic gazette ; and at last the completed Diatribe, with all the supplements and correspondence, a budget of irresistible fun.

We have the means of knowing precisely how the king felt when this budget greeted him, upon his return from his tour in Silesia. His sister of Bayreuth, hearing of Voltaire's departure, wrote to the king asking an explanation of an event so much spoken of. His reply, dated April 12th, contained this passage : —

“ You ask news of Voltaire ; here is the truth of his story. He has behaved like the greatest scoundrel in the universe. He began with endeavoring to embroil everybody by lies and infamous calumnies, at which he did not blush ; then he set himself to writing libels against Maupertuis, and he takes the part of Koenig, whom he hates¹ as much as he does Maupertuis, to chagrin the president, to render him ridiculous, and to get the presidency of our Academy : all this, with a number of intrigues, which I pass over, and in which his baseness, his wickedness, and his duplicity were manifest. See him printing his *Akakia* here in Potsdam by abusing a permission I gave him to print the ‘ Defense of Lord Bolingbroke.’ I discover it ; I have the edition seized, throw it into the fire, and sternly forbid him to have that libel printed anywhere else. I scarcely get to Berlin, when *Akakia* appears there, and is sold there ; upon which I cause it to be burned by the hands of the executioner. Voltaire, so far from pausing at this, doubles and triples the dose, writing against every one. I had my part in this business, and I was lenient enough in permitting him to take his departure. At present, he is at Leipsic, where he distills new poisons, and where he pretends to be sick in order to correct a terrible work which he composes there. You see, then, that, far from wishing ever to see that wretch again, there is nothing left except to break entirely with him. If you permit me to give you my opinion freely, my dear sister, I should not be sorry for him to go to Bayreuth ; for, with your consent, I would send some one there to ask him for the key and cross, which he still has, and, above all, for an edition of my verses, which he has sent to Frankfort-on-the-Main, and which I am utterly unwilling to leave in his possession, seeing the bad

¹ A mistake. Voltaire was on the friendliest terms with Koenig, as his letters of these months abundantly attest. His letters to Koenig are noticeably long and cordial.

use he is capable of making of it. As to yourself, my dear sister, I advise you not to write to him with your own hand; I was caught in that way. He is the most treacherous rascal there is in the universe. You will be astonished at all the base, deceitful, and wicked things he has done here. Men are broken upon the wheel who deserve it less than he."¹

This was extreme for a philosopher. The sister of the angry monarch, in her reply, April 24th, sought to appease her "dearest brother:" —

"I have seen to-day a letter from Voltaire. He is going to Gotha, where his niece will join him. I doubt if he will come here. He sends word, however, that he will write again from Gotha. Perhaps he intends to establish himself there with his niece, which I shall try to prevent. The letters which he has written to his friends at this place (letters written in confidence, and which have been shown to me only after urgent solicitation) are very respectful towards you. He gives you the just title of great man. He complains of the preference which you gave to Maupertuis, and the prejudice which you have against him. He jests very piquantly upon the president, and I confess to you, my dear brother, that I was not able to keep from laughing while reading the piece; for it is so comically turned that a reader can scarcely keep his countenance. I shall not fail to notify you of anything I may learn about him."

The king would not be appeased. He replied promptly, April 29th:—

"Do not believe that I have told you the hundredth part of Voltaire's rascalities, of which there are enough to make a collection as large as a volume of Bayle. It is a pity indeed that the great talents of that man should be tarnished by the blackest and most perfidious soul, which embitters and spoils his whole existence."

Such were the feelings of this king toward the author of *Akakia*. His conduct was in accordance therewith, — violent, precipitate, and unjust. He had a pen, which Voltaire had taught him how to use; he had a printing-office at his command; and it would not have been difficult to reverse the system of *Akakia*, and set off the best things in Maupertuis's works against the absurdities used in the *Diatribes*. Frederic had entered the arena as *writer*, volunteering a defense of his president with the pen alone. Voltaire accepted the challenge, drew his pen once more, and soon had the presi-

¹ 27 Œuvres de Frédéric, 226.

dent prostrate on the sand, kicking the air, amid the merriment of the spectators. Then Frederic sprang to his feet, resumed the monarch, and ordered up some of those hundred and fifty thousand mustachios of whom his victor spoke. In other words, he went to his cabinet, touched his bell for Fredersdorff, and arranged to put upon Voltaire a gross public affront.

He had been led to suppose that the traveler intended to make some stay at Frankfort-on-the-Main, a free city, three hundred miles from Berlin, but dependent upon Frederic's forbearance for the semblance of "freedom" which it then enjoyed. At Leipzig Voltaire was comparatively safe; at Frankfort there was nothing that dared oppose the King of Prussia so long as he gave the magistracy an available pretext. At Frankfort the king kept a Resident, at two hundred thalers a year; and the incumbent was then a punctilious, unpliant man, named Freytag, — a dull, fussy, literal gentleman, who would obey an order with the exactness of an old sergeant-major, provided nothing was left to his discretion. To set such a person rummaging among the manuscripts of a man of letters was like sending a trained bear up a tree to bring down two eggs of a certain shade from a robin's nest. Suppose there should happen to be three such eggs, or only one; then what? If the parent bird should be so far lost to decency as to fly at a good bear's eyes, what then would an all-gracious sovereign lord be pleased to command?

April 11, 1753, Frederic, King of Prussia, caused Fredersdorff to write an order to Freytag, of which the following is a translation: —

"His majesty, our gracious master, makes known by the present to his Resident and Counselor of War, Von Freytag, that one De Voltaire will pass at a very early day through Frankfort-on-the-Main. The good pleasure of his majesty is that the Resident shall repair to his lodgings, accompanied by the aulic counselor living there, and demand of Voltaire, in his majesty's name, the chamberlain's key, as well as the cross and ribbon of the order of merit; and as Voltaire addressed to Frankfort his packets and packages on leaving Potsdam, among which will be found many letters and writings in his majesty's own hand, the said packets and packages, as well as the cases which he shall have with him, are to be opened in your presence, and every-

thing in the said handwriting is to be seized; also a book specified in the note herein inclosed. But as Voltaire is very cunning, you are to take, both of you, all the precautions to prevent his concealing or removing anything. After everything shall have been well examined, and all the objects found, they must be carefully packed and sent to me at Potsdam. In case he makes any difficulty in surrendering the said objects in an amiable manner, he is to be threatened with arrest; and, if that does not suffice, he is to be actually arrested, and you will take possession of everything, without apology; but afterwards he is to be allowed to continue his journey."

The Resident, on receiving this order, April 19th, was bewildered, as a wiser than he might have been; for the "note" which was to have been "herein inclosed" was not inclosed, and therefore the book was not "specified." Nor was the Resident acquainted with the king's handwriting. The great spring fair of Frankfort was in full tide; strangers were arriving every hour, and a Voltaire might easily slip through the city. Goethe speaks in his Autobiography of the town of booths springing up within the town of stone, and of the bustle and stir of these occasions, so joyous and memorable to children. Freytag, after taking due precautions, wrote for further instructions concerning the unspecified book. And besides, "If Voltaire should say that he has sent his baggage on before him, is he to be detained a prisoner here until he has had it brought back?"

After the usual week's interval (Frankfort and Potsdam were five or six days apart in the mail service of the time), the answer came: "If the baggage has already passed beyond Frankfort, Voltaire is to be kept in sight until he shall have caused it to be brought back, and delivered into your own hands the royal manuscripts. . . . The book which is to be principally returned is entitled 'Œuvres de Poësie.'" Frederdsdorff did not "specify" whether this book was one of the royal manuscripts, or whether it was a mere printed volume.

For six weeks Freytag and his Aulic Counselor Schmid were in extreme agitation, keeping a watch at every inn and every gate, wondering what kind of monster this De Voltaire could be who had in his possession such unspeakable things. At length, in the evening of May 31st, the culprit arrived. The crisis was upon the vigilant and still bewildered Resident. Unhappily for him, his legal adviser, the Aulic

Counselor Schmid, was then absent from Frankfort, and Freytag felt justified in summoning to his assistance Senator Rucker and Lieutenant Brettwitz, of the Prussian army, who was in the city as a recruiting officer. These three gentlemen, at eight in the morning of June 1st, called upon the traveler at the Golden Lion.

We need not go to Voltaire, nor to Collini, to learn what occurred at the inn that day; for within a few years the official reports of the zealous Freytag and all the other documents appertaining to this case have been published in Germany; and it is from them we learn the extent, the duration, the blundering enormity, of the outrage put upon Voltaire in this free city.¹ He was still in the service of the King of Prussia. He had not resigned; he had not been dismissed; he had not been notified that the king desired his resignation, and wished to have his key and cross returned. As to the "Œuvres de Poësie," they were his own by double right: he had assisted to compose them, and the king had given them to him. They were as much his property as the copy of "La Henriade" was the king's property, which the author had given him in those days of youthful illusion, when the servants of the crown prince used to run to meet an approaching courier in the hope of being the first to convey to the prince's eager hands a packet from Cirey. Freytag shall have the honor of relating to the reader the history of the long day he spent with his two companions at the Golden Lion. He addressed his report to his "very illustrious, very powerful king," his "very gracious king and lord:" —

"As M. de Voltaire arrived yesterday, I went to his hotel with Senator Rucker and Lieutenant de Brettwitz, who happened to be here as a recruiting officer. After the usual salutations, I communicated to him your majesty's very gracious requirement. He was thrown into consternation, closed his eyes, and threw himself back in his chair. So far, I had spoken only of papers. When he had recovered himself, he called to his 'friend' Collini, whom I had taken care to get out of the way, and opened for me two trunks, a large case, and two portfolios. He made a thousand protestations of his fidelity to your majesty; then again felt himself disordered. He has, moreover, all the appearance of a skeleton. In the first trunk was immediately

¹ See Voltaire et Frédéric, par Gustave Desnoiresterres, page 446, etc.

found the packet subjoined, enveloped, and ticketed *sub A*, which I placed in the keeping of the officer, without opening it. The rest of the examination lasted from nine o'clock in the morning until five in the afternoon, and I found only one poem, which he was unwilling to surrender to me, and which I placed in the same packet. Then I caused this packet, *sub A*, to be sealed by the senator, and I placed upon it also my own seal. I asked him, upon his honor, if he had nothing else; and he declared, in the most solemn manner, that he had not.

“We spoke then of the book of ‘*Œuvres de Poësie*.’ He said that he had put it into a large box, but that he did not know whether that box was at Leipsic or at Hamburg. I then notified him that I could not allow him to pursue his journey until I had that case. He endeavored in a hundred ways to dissuade me from opposing his departure. He said it was necessary that he should take the waters; his life depended upon it. Not wishing the affair to be brought before the city council, since he gives himself the title of Gentleman of the Chamber of France, and since in such cases the magistrates make many difficulties in authorizing an arrest, I at once agreed with him that he should remain a prisoner in the house where he then was until the arrival of the box from Hamburg or Leipsic; we further arranged that he should give me for my surety two parcels of his papers, such as they happened to lie upon the table, after having closed and sealed them, and that he should sign the agreement subjoined, *sub A, B*. I took measures with the landlord of the hotel, Hoppe by name, who has a brother a lieutenant in your majesty’s service, that Voltaire should not escape, nor send away his effects. I had thought to give him for guard some grenadier; I was hindered by the military organization here, which is so defective that I trust less to the vigilance of a sentinel than to the word of the landlord, who confirmed it by an oath. As Voltaire finds himself very weak and suffering, I have confided him to the care of the first physician of the city. I have offered also to accompany him in a carriage in the public gardens, and I have placed at his service all that my cellar and my house contain. Upon which I left him sufficiently tranquil and composed, after he had given me the key and the decoration with the ribbon.

“In the evening, at seven o'clock, he sent me his commission as chamberlain, *sub C*; and this morning a manuscript in the king’s handwriting, *sub D*, which he said he had found under the table. I cannot know how many more packages he has, and as I do not know the nature and quantity, little or great, of the papers which I am to search for, the most convenient course would be to send hither a secretary of the king to make a minute examination; and this so much

the more, as I do not in the least know your majesty's handwriting. Finally, Voltaire wrote in my presence to his agent at Leipsic to send me the case, and he told me to write to the intimate counselor of your majesty, De Fredersdorff, to obtain an order that he should not be kept here any longer. He even desired that I should send that letter by a special courier; but as I have already lost three louis d'or in unnecessary expenses, I have used the ordinary post.

"I gave him a receipt for the two parcels of manuscripts which he placed in my hands. I also, at his urgent request, gave him a note, which he intends to send to his niece to console her, and in which I promised him that, after the arrival of the case from Leipsic, he shall be detained here no longer."

No narrative of this day's proceedings written by Voltaire mentions that he was subjected to the blind fumbling of these men among his papers for eight hours. He may have exaggerated some details, and, perhaps, imagined some; but his relation of the events conveys no adequate idea of the amount of ignominy which he had to suffer. The agreement which honest Freytag was so good as to sign, for the consolation of Madame Denis, was as follows:—

"MONSIEUR, — As soon as the large packing-case arrives, wherein is the 'Œuvre de Poësie' of the king, which his majesty requires, you can go whithersoever shall seem good to you. At Frankfort, June 1st. FREYTAG, Resident."

The Resident was obliging enough to write and sign this twice: once for the captive, and again for his niece. It was probably upon her copy that Voltaire wrote, *Good for the œuvre de poëshie of the king your master*; both he and his secretary insisting that Freytag spelled *poësie* with a redundant letter. The reader will have observed how dutiful and submissive the ravaged author was: sending round to Freytag's house the same evening a paper which the Resident, after a day's search, had overlooked; and the next morning a manuscript in the king's own hand, which, wonderful to relate, was found under the table!

He was now a prisoner at the Golden Lion, and would have had a sentinel at his door, but for Freytag's distrust of the Frankfort grenadiers. He had signed a parole not to go beyond the garden of the inn. These arrangements made and Madame Denis notified, he seemed tranquil, and kept Collini and the

copyist steadily employed at the "Annals of the Empire." The great box containing the royal poems might have been dispatched by way of Hamburg, and Strasbourg itself was four days distant by post-chaise. He might be detained several days, but he seemed to accept the situation. He wrapped himself in secrecy. During the first days of his detention, he wrote a letter of great length to Koenig, and two letters to his guardian angels, but did not tell either of them what had happened. Collini thought him peacefully engaged upon the Annals. He should have known his chief better, and, indeed, later in his memoirs, he relates an anecdote of this time, which betrays irritation: —

"Voltaire," he remarks, "was beside himself when he thought he had been wronged. His first movements were impetuous, but he soon recovered self-possession. I was a witness at Frankfort of a trait of vivacity on his part which will give a just idea of that impatience of which he was not the master. The bookseller, Van Duren, came one morning to present a bill for some books that he had sent to Voltaire thirteen years before. Van Duren could not be admitted to speak to him, and left me the account. Voltaire read it, and found that the sum demanded was for some copies of his own works. He was indignant. The bookseller returned after dinner; my illustrious traveling companion and I were walking in the garden of the inn. Scarcely did he perceive Van Duren than he went to him quicker than lightning, gave him a box on the ear, and immediately retired. It is the only time I ever saw him strike any one. Judge of my embarrassment. I found myself all at once alone, face to face with the boxed bookseller. What to say to him? I tried my best to console him; but I was so much confused that I could find nothing better to say than that, after all, the blow came from a great man. The bookseller's bill is in my hand at this time as a souvenir of that memorable blow. Except for such trifling vivacities as these he was good and benevolent."

Upon the fifth day of his detention, he had the honor of a second visit from the Prussian Resident, which was not reassuring to either of them. "He begins already," wrote Freytag to Fredersdorff, "to make some good friends here, who flatter him, perhaps, with the hope of his obtaining the support of

the city council. When I returned to his rooms he was insolent enough. He asked to lodge elsewhere. He wished to pay his court to the Duke of Meiningen. But I had to refuse him, although with politeness. Then he cried, 'What! your king wishes to arrest me here, in an imperial city? Why did he not do it in his own states? You are a man without pity; you are killing me; you will all surely lose the king's favor.' After replying coldly, I withdrew." The Resident owned that he was embarrassed and alarmed; he wished to be relieved of the duty imposed upon him, and informed Fredersdorff that he must have more express and formal orders.

The interview exasperated the prisoner also, and he seems instantly to have resorted to the expedient of an appeal to the emperor; for his appeal is dated June 5th, the day on which Freytag wrote to Fredersdorff. The court in all Europe that held the King of Prussia in the deepest antipathy was that of the Empress Maria Theresa, from whom Frederic had snatched the province of Silesia at the beginning of his reign, and for the retention of which he was about to fight again in the Seven Years' War. The emperor, Francis I., Duke of Lorraine by inheritance, had known Voltaire of old, and shown him some favor. To him the captive now made an elaborate, artful, but secret appeal, and inclosed it in a letter to one of the Austrian ministers. He sent also for the emperor's perusal a copy of the letter which Frederic had written him in reply to Madame Denis's prediction that the King of Prussia would be the death of him. He gave a brief relation of his arrest, and entreated the emperor to give secret orders to his minister at Frankfort to take him under his protection, and prevent the magistrates from violating the laws of "*his imperial city of Frankfort.*" His sacred majesty, he said, had a thousand ways of supporting the laws of the empire and of Frankfort. "I do not think," he added, "that we live in so unhappy a time that M. Freytag can with impunity render himself master of the life and person of a stranger in the city where his sacred majesty was crowned." To the Austrian minister he dropped a hint as a possible lure. He said that if he could converse with their sacred majesties, *there were things he should say to them that might be of use.* It would be extremely difficult for him, he said, to make the journey *incog-*

nito ; but if, some time hence, when his health should be a little reëstablished, they would indicate a house in Vienna where he could remain unknown for some days, he would not hesitate.

He wrote also to M. d'Argenson, of the French ministry, stating his situation, and assuring him that, whatever knowledge of the human heart he may have acquired, there were some things he would tell him, *on his return*, that would astonish him.

Frederic, however, had chosen his ground well ; his influence at Frankfort proved to be paramount ; and there was not a court that would not then have seized the chance of gaining a point with the King of Prussia by at least letting alone a captive author who had offended him. " My landlord," wrote Voltaire, June 5th, " at whose house I am in prison by an unheard-of outrage, told me to-day that the minister of the King of Prussia, the Sieur Freytag, is held in horror by all the city, but that no one dares resist him." No one did resist him on this occasion. The King of Prussia had his way in Frankfort as if it had been one of the cities of his inheritance.

The great box was long in coming. On the ninth day of his detention his niece arrived, Madame Denis, who had come post-haste from Strasbourg as soon as she had heard of this strange arrest. We can easily imagine the stout, impetuous lady rushing into the Golden Lion, all flushed and dusty from her four days' ride, and exclaiming, as she saw his wasted form and face, "*Mon oncle !* I knew that man would be the death of you !" But she began at once to do whatever lay in her power to prevent the fulfillment of her prophecy ; and her first act was to write a letter to the King of Prussia, which was prudent, moderate, and well calculated to answer its purpose. In his best estate, her uncle was not robust ; but he was now, through this long series of exciting events, miserable, weak, and exhausted.

" I come here to conduct my uncle to the waters of Plombières ; I find him dying, and, as a climax of evils, under arrest, by your majesty's orders, in an inn, without being able to breathe the open air. . . . My uncle, no doubt, has been very much in the wrong toward your majesty, since your majesty, to whom he has always been attached with so much enthusiasm, treats him with such hardness. But,

sire, deign to remember the fifteen years of bounties with which you have honored him, which at length snatched him from the arms of his family, to whom he has always been a father. Your majesty asks the return of your book which you presented to him. Sire, he is assuredly ready to give it up; he has sworn it to me. He carried it away with him with your permission; he is causing it to be brought here with his papers in a case addressed to your minister. He has himself asked that everything be examined, and everything be taken which can concern your majesty. . . . Our family will return all of your letters which we shall find at Paris. . . . Sire, have pity upon my condition and my grief. I have no consolation but in your sacred promises, and in the words so worthy of you, '*I should be in despair to be the cause of the unhappiness of my enemy; how could I be of the unhappiness of my friend?*' These words, sire, traced by your own hand, the hand which has written so many beautiful things, are my dearest hope."

This letter, with the best speed then attainable, could not bring an answer from Potsdam in less than twelve days; and it so chanced that, while these scenes were transacting at Frankfort, the King of Prussia was in a distant province, on one of his tours of inspection. Freytag himself could get no further instructions; and those which he had already received confused and terrified more than they enlightened him. He did not yet know what "writings" the king wanted, nor had he yet any means of judging which of the manuscripts in Voltaire's possession were in the king's hand. If the king's object was to annoy and insult the author of *Akakia*, his object was attained; if the object was simply to recover the poems and letters, then we must admit that the conduct of the affair was not creditable to the Fredersdorff administration.

Frederic had good reasons to dread the circulation of his poems, just then. That "Palladion" of his, a poem in six cantos, in puerile imitation of "La Pucelle," goes far beyond Voltaire in burlesquing the Christian traditions and beliefs. He treats Jehovah and his "court" precisely in the tone of Lucian when he brings Jupiter and Juno upon the scene. He describes the heavenly host as having had their vocal organs improved in the mode of Italy.

"Imaginez, si vous pouvez, des anges,
Des chérubins, vers le haut bout placés,

Des séraphins, des trônes, des archanges,
 Pour bien chanter de bonne heure châtés ;
 Imaginez, au milieu d'eux, que brille
 Du vieux papa la celeste famille ;
 Près de sa dextre on voit, avec son fils,
 Une beauté, reine du paradis,
 Beauté faisant enfants en son jeune age." ¹

We can conceive that the "head of the Protestant interest" would not like to have a cheap edition of this poem published; for the above is very far from being the passage most offensive to Christians. In the same canto, all that Catholics hold most sacred and most venerable is tossed in a very ragged blanket. Further on, the scandals of the Russian court, the barbarism of the Russian people, and the horrors of Siberia are treated at great length and with riotous freedom. Austria is not spared, nor the Pope, nor Frederic's own officers and comrades. The poem ends with the "good Father Eternal" turning out of heaven "the saints and sophists," and putting in their places "the honest deists," who, being seated at the right hand, "see the profile of the celestial King." Assuredly the royal author of this free and foolish poem would have gladly seen it safe in his own cabinet; at least, so long as the stress of politics lasted. Kings need not satirize powerful neighbors, nor scoff at their own subjects' cherished beliefs and sacred usages. It is not their vocation.

The great box being still delayed, there was no choice but to wait at the Golden Lion, and push on the Annals. The detention of a renowned author was making a stir in Frankfort and adjacent duchies. Great company alighted at the Golden Lion inn; among others, that Duke of Meiningen to whom the captive wished to pay his court. Work upon the Annals seldom ceased, and, meanwhile, both uncle and niece looked all round the compass for any chance of relief. Among other letters, Madame Denis wrote one to the Prussian ambassador in France, Lord Keith, asking his interposition, and the ambassador in his reply favored the prisoner with some good advice. "Kings have long arms," said he. He urged her to dispose her uncle to submission. Where could he go? asked the ambassador. Not to any country where the Inquisition was active and powerful. Not to any Mahometan country,

¹ Canto ii.

after such a tragedy as he had composed upon Mahomet. "He is too old to go to China and turn mandarin. In one word, if he is wise, it is only in France that he will feel at home. He has friends there; you will have him with you for the rest of his days. Do not allow him to exclude himself from the joy of returning to France; and you know well that if he launches offensive words and epigrams against the king, my master, one word which he should order me to say to the court of France would suffice to prevent M. de Voltaire from returning, and too late he would repent of his conduct. *Genus irritabile vatum*; your uncle does not falsify the saying. Moderate him. . . . The king, my master, has never done foul deeds; I defy his enemies to mention one; but if some big and strong Prussian, offended by your uncle's words, should give him a blow upon the head with his fist, he would crush your uncle. . . . Don't show this to him; burn it; but give him the substance of it, as from yourself."

Voltaire scarcely needed this advice. He knew better, perhaps, than any ambassador, when it was safe to be bold, and when it was indispensable to crouch. Like one of those alert and irrepressible boys who pass their days in the engine-room of a great sea-going steamer, running loose and climbing free among the ponderous machinery; who know the precise instant when to dodge the huge descending beam, and dare to ride aloft upon it as it ascends; who know where the iron is hot and where cool, and every aperture through which escape is possible; so this agile spirit lived among the monarchies and hierarchies of the time, familiar and fearless, courting and avoiding the crushing strokes of power, and answering saucily from remote and comfortable nooks which his masters could not reach. He could be saucy enough, sometimes, before he had reached a coigne of vantage. He received, on one of these days of detention at Frankfort, a parcel by the post; and Freytag wrote to inquire if it had any relation to their affair. "It is a package of my works," he wrote in reply, "which I desire to have corrected and rebound, in order to make a present of them to M. Schmid and M. Freytag."

At length, after eighteen days of delay, the important case arrived, and was duly delivered at the house of the Resident, to whom it was addressed. This was Monday, June 18th,

the day when the courier was due from Potsdam, by whom Freytag expected those elucidating orders of which he acutely felt the need. The courier was not due until eleven A. M., but the box arrived early in the morning; and Voltaire at once made preparations for departure, thinking to leave Frankfort about three in the afternoon. He had not the least doubt of being allowed to depart, since he held the written engagement of the Resident to that effect; and, accordingly, he at once dispatched Collini to the Resident's house, to be present at the opening of the box. "Freytag," says Collini, "answered me brusquely that he had not time to attend to the opening until the afternoon." Voltaire sent again and again; sent several times in the course of an hour, entreating the Resident to proceed with the opening. Freytag reports that he advised the "importunate" captive to be patient, "seeing that this was the Monday on which letters came from Berlin."

A letter did indeed arrive toward noon from Fredersdorff, which was disappointing in the extreme to all parties. The king had not yet returned to the capital; he was coming in a few days; and Freytag was enjoined to do nothing further in the business whatever until he had received the king's express orders, which he might expect by the next mail, due on Thursday. "You are to pay no regard," added Fredersdorff, "to anything which the impatience of M. de Voltaire may make him say; you have to go on as you have begun, following the supreme orders which you have received." Freytag at once communicated this disagreeable intelligence with all possible politeness: —

"Monsieur, by a precise order, which I have this moment received, I have the honor to say to you, monsieur, that the intention of the king is that everything should remain in the condition in which the affair is at present; without disturbing and without unpacking the box in question, without sending back the cross and key, and without making the least movement until the next post, which will arrive on Thursday. I hope that these orders are the consequence of my report of the 5th of this month, in which I could not sufficiently praise and admire your resignation to the will of the king, your obedience in remaining in the house where you are, despite your infirmity, and your sincere protestations of fidelity towards his majesty. If for this I merit, monsieur, your friendship and good-will, I shall be charmed to be able to name myself your very humble and obedient servant."

Nothing could be more polite, nothing more exasperating. Here was the most irritable of the *genus irritabile*, a man as absorbed in work as a prime minister, eager to get where he could go on with that work to advantage; and here was a lady, a true child of Paris, to whom a palace out of Paris had been a prison; and there was the traveling carriage packed and ready; and it was Monday afternoon; and now comes a note politely saying, You cannot stir before Thursday at the earliest, and, perhaps, not then! This, too, after eighteen days' previous detention, of which every hour was a distinct and galling outrage, and when the prisoner held the written promise of the king's representative that he should be permitted to go whithersoever he would as soon as the case of books arrived and the work of *poésie* was taken therefrom. The case had arrived; the book was in it; and he was a prisoner still. Voltaire, upon receiving Freytag's note, went himself to his house, and asked to see the king's orders. Freytag, as Collini reports, "stammered, refused, and used language violently insulting."

The situation now had something of the terrible in it; for the unknown is terrible. What *could* be the king's object? Perhaps he had repented, and was about to summon the captive back; perhaps he was preparing new and worse ignominy: in either case, it behoved the prisoner to take measures. Madame Denis, as a matter of course, feared the worst. That very evening she wrote a moving letter to one of her uncle's friends at the Prussian court, either D'Argens, or the Abbé de Prades, in which she dwelt upon this new horror: "M. de Voltaire has fulfilled all his engagements, and still he is detained a prisoner. . . . For three years past I have been expecting the King of Prussia to cause his death," etc. She wrote also a letter to Madame de Pompadour, recounting the circumstances. "My uncle," she added, "has labored assiduously for two years to perfect the talents of the King of Prussia. He has served him with a zeal of which there are few examples. The recompense he receives is cruel. I have taken the liberty to write to that prince a letter steeped in my tears. I dictate this memoir to a man on whom I rely, unable to write myself, having been already bled twice, and my uncle being in bed, without help."

In these distressing circumstances Voltaire suddenly resolved to act upon the principle formulated by Beaumarchais, when he said, "If I were accused of stealing the towers of Notre Dame, I should escape first and discuss afterward." He resolved to fly. His plan was to abandon the great box of books to Freytag, leave Madame Denis at the Golden Lion in charge of his effects and his interests, and go with Collini alone, in a hired chaise, to Mayence, twenty miles distant, and thence press on to a place of safety, if any such there were in Europe for such a fugitive. He fixed upon Wednesday, June 20th, for the attempt. The post from Berlin was due on the day following, but he was determined not to wait for new complications.

The hour having arrived, Voltaire and his secretary, followed by a servant carrying two portfolios and a heavy cash-box, slipped away from the Golden Lion, without, as they thought, being observed. They walked to the place appointed, found their carriage, got safely into it, and rode away toward the Mayence gate. "Our departure," says Collini, "resembled the flight of two criminals." What next occurred let the vigilant Freytag first relate, as he related it to Fredersdorff, a few hours after:—

"It was toward three o'clock in the afternoon, on Wednesday, the 20th, that the spy posted by me at the Golden Lion, the lodging of Voltaire, came to me, breathless, with the news that he had fled. Unfortunately, neither my secretary nor any servant was at hand. In this extremity I had recourse to all my neighborhood. I sent, post-haste, messengers upon the three principal roads, to Hanau, to Friedeberg, and to Mayence. I dressed myself hurriedly, and rushed headlong to the Golden Lion, as if running a race. There I learned that Voltaire, in a costume of black velvet, had directed his steps toward the Crown-of-the-Empire Hotel, where he had stopped a post-chaise returning to Mayence, in which he had started. The electoral chancellor, Baron Munch, was so obliging as to place at my disposal, in this extremity, his state carriage, with six seats, that was standing before the Lion. I dispatched beforehand a courier to the Mayence gate, to detain Voltaire there until my arrival. I hurried away immediately to the house of my colleague, the Aulic Counselor Schmid, who, to complete my ill-luck, I found was not at home. He was half a league from the city, at his country house. One of his counting-room clerks rode thither on horseback in ten minutes, and went afterwards to the house of the ruling burgomaster, of whose proceedings I shall speak further on.

“I overtook Voltaire and his Italian secretary, in a hired chaise, just under the tree at the turnpike. He had lost his memorandum book going across the city, and had consumed about four minutes in looking for it, but for which I should not have found him upon the territory of Frankfort. My character had weight enough with the under-officer at the gate to induce him to arrest Voltaire upon the spot; and not till then did I perceive what those two people really were. The worst bandits could not have made such struggles to get away. He told me to my face, among other things, that I had caused a thousand thalers to be asked of him as the price of his release. He denied his engagements, and he even told me that he had been several times at my house. The young secretary, who, in truth, appears to have much intelligence, confirmed all that he said, with an effrontery such as I have never seen equaled in the world. I left them in charge of the under-officer, who commanded six men, and I flew to the principal guard, and from there to the burgomaster's house.

“That official at first made many difficulties, both because the royal requisition had not arrived, and because M. de Voltaire was in the service of the King of France. But my presence and the requisition subjoined, *sub C* (which, however, was not drawn and signed by us two until the next day), induced the burgomaster, despite all the proceedings of Voltaire, to confirm the arrest, and to promise the extradition, contrary to the ordinary rules. This provisional order of the burgomaster was ratified on Thursday morning by a decision of the council *in pleno*, and transmitted to me by one of the city secretaries, with the assurance of a deference the most invariable and the most submissive towards his majesty.

“If I should report all the doings, truly unimaginable, of Voltaire during his arrest, I should have to fill some leaves. One, however, I cannot refrain from mentioning. On returning to the barrier with the burgomaster's order, I learned that Voltaire had employed the time in destroying part of his papers. I offered to take him to my own house, where he would remain confined until the next day. He then got into the six-seated state carriage which I had used, and he gave me, as he said, all his wealth. He had, in fact, a little cash-box, which my servant could scarcely lift. Nevertheless, when we were about to start, he said that he would prefer to be openly a prisoner than be concealed in my house. Then I caused some men to march on both sides of the carriage, and I went myself, like this prisoner, in the same carriage, partly open, across the city, where the crowd had then become exceedingly great.

“The landlord of the Golden Lion being unwilling to have Voltaire any longer in his house, on account of his incredible parsimony, I de-

posited him at the house of the Aulic Counselor Schmid, being resolved to decide nothing without his good advice, and without his acquiescence in the mode of captivity which should in future be applied to the prisoner. On his return to the city the Aulic Counselor went immediately to the burgomaster's house, not only for the purpose of favorably disposing him, but also to give him his guarantee with regard to the royal requisition. He met there the pretended niece of Voltaire, but whom I consider as quite another sort of person; for yesterday a letter arrived at its destination bearing the address *Madame de Voltaire*. As this impudent hussy was going about in the city stunning the magistrates, the burgomaster had her arrested, together with the secretary; and as Voltaire, in the house of Schmid, had tried to escape a second time, he was conducted to the Goat inn, where a guard was assigned to each prisoner, which we reduced to two soldiers after the receipt of your last letter."

In this report, the simplicity of the Resident reveals the bungling outrage in a more odious light than Voltaire's art or Collini's anger exhibits it. Here were three persons arrested, with every circumstance of infamy, without any pretense of law or semblance of right. Many years after, Collini wrote his recollections of this day's experience. Voltaire was then no longer among the living, and his ancient secretary had nothing to gain or lose from him or his. He adds some curious details:—

"Having reached the gate of the city that leads to the Mayence road, our carriage was stopped, and the Resident was notified of an attempt to get away. While we were waiting for his coming, Voltaire sent his servant to Madame Denis. Freytag soon arrived in a carriage escorted by soldiers, and made us get into it, accompanying the order with imprecations and insults. Forgetting that he represented the king, his master, he got in with us, and thus, like a policeman, conducted us across the city, through crowds of the populace. In this way we were conducted to the house of a merchant named Schmid, who had the title of counselor to the King of Prussia, and was the substitute of Freytag. The door is barricaded, and sentinels are posted to keep out the assembled people. We are taken into the counting-house; clerks, valets, and female servants surround us. Madame Schmid passes in front of Voltaire with a disdainful expression, and listens to the tale of Freytag, who recounts with the air of a bully how he achieved this important capture, and vaunts his address and courage.

"They take possession of our effects and the cash box: they make

us give up all the money we had in our pockets; they take away from Voltaire his watch, his snuff-box, and some jewels that he wears. He asks for a receipt; it is refused. 'Count this money,' says Schmid to his clerks; 'these are the sort of fellows who are capable of maintaining that there was twice as much money.' I ask by what right they arrested me, and I insist strongly that a formal accusation should be drawn up. They threaten to commit me to the guard-house. Voltaire reclaims his snuff-box, because he cannot do without snuff. They reply that the custom is to seize everything. His eyes sparkle with fury, and from time to time he raises them toward mine, as if to interrogate them. Suddenly, perceiving a door partly open, he plunges toward it, and goes out. Madame Schmid gets together a squad of shopmen and three maids, puts herself at their head, and runs after the fugitive. 'Can I not, then,' cries he, '*pourvoir aux besoins de la nature?*' He is allowed. They range themselves in a circle around him, and, afterward, lead him back to the counting-room.

"On his reëntering, Schmid, who took this as a personal offense, cried out, 'Wretch! you shall be treated without pity and without ceremony!' and the servants renewed their outcries. Voltaire, beside himself with passion, rushed a second time into the yard, and again they brought him back. This scene had made the Resident and all his gang thirsty. Schmid had some wine brought, and the crowd began to drink the health of his excellency Monseigneur Freytag!

"After waiting two hours, the time had come to dispose of the prisoners. The portfolios and the cash-box were thrown into an empty trunk, which was fastened with a padlock, and sealed with a paper stamped with the arms of Voltaire and the cipher of Schmid. Dorn, clerk to Freytag, was ordered to conduct us. He took us to a low tavern called the Goat, where twelve soldiers, commanded by an under-officer, attended us. There Voltaire was shut up in a chamber with three soldiers who had fixed bayonets. I was separated from him and guarded in the same way. Though I were to live centuries, I shall never forget the atrocities of that day.

"Madame Denis had not abandoned her uncle. Scarcely had she heard of Voltaire's arrest than she hastened to the burgomaster to demand his release. That functionary, a man weak and limited, had been gained over by Schmid. He not only refused to be just and to listen to Madame Denis, but he ordered her to remain under arrest at her hotel. This explains why Voltaire was deprived of the assistance of his niece during the scandalous scene at the counting-house.

"I ought not to forget one anecdote. When we were arrested at the gate of Frankfort, and while we were waiting in the carriage for the decision of Monseigneur Freytag, he drew some papers from one

of his portfolios, and said, as he gave them to me, 'Hide that about you.' I concealed the papers in that garment which an ingenious writer has named the indispensable one, thoroughly resolved to prevent all researches that could be made in that asylum. In the evening, at the Goat, three soldiers guarded me in my room, and kept their eyes upon me. I burned, nevertheless, to examine those papers, which I believed to be of the greatest importance, as that word is usually understood. To satisfy my curiosity and deceive the vigilance of my guards, I went to bed in my clothes. Concealed by my curtains, I carefully drew the precious deposit from the place where I had put it. It proved to be the poem of 'La Pucelle,' so far as it had then been written.

"While he was in Schmid's yard, surrounded by madame and her squad, I was called to go to his assistance. I go out; I find him in a corner surrounded by persons closely watching him to prevent his flight; and I see him bent over, putting his fingers into his mouth, and trying all he could to vomit. Terrified, I cry out, 'Are you sick, then?' He looks at me with tears gushing from his eyes. He says to me, in a low voice, *Fingo, fingo* (I am making believe). These words reassure me. I pretend to believe that he is not well, and I give him my arm to assist him to return to the counting-house. He hoped by that stratagem to appease the fury of that *canaille*, and induce them to treat him with more moderation.

"The redoubtable Dorn, after having deposited us at the Goat, went with some soldiers to the Golden Lion, where Madame Denis, by the burgomaster's orders, was under arrest. He left his squad on the stairs, and presented himself to that lady, saying to her that her uncle wished to see her, and that he had come to conduct her to him. Ignorant of what had passed at Schmid's house, she hastened to go. Dorn gave her his arm. Scarcely was she out of the inn than the three soldiers surrounded her, and conducted her, not to her uncle's room at the Goat, but to a garret of the same inn, furnished only with a little bed, where she had, to use Voltaire's expression, only soldiers for *femmes de chambre*, and their bayonets for curtains. Dorn had the insolence to have his supper brought to the room, and, without regarding the horrible convulsions into which such an adventure had thrown Madame Denis, he proceeded to eat it, and to empty bottle after bottle."

Voltaire adds that she was menaced with violence: and, when we consider that the astute Freytag regarded her as a disreputable person, a Madame de Voltaire *pro tem.*, it is highly probable that Dorn was not respectful in his demeanor

toward her. We can easily surmise what they thought of her "horrible convulsions."

The situation, then, the next morning, — Thursday, June 21, 1753, — was as follows: Voltaire, his niece, and his secretary were prisoners at the Goat tavern, guarded by soldiers; the great box was unopened at the Resident's house; Freytag, Schmid, Dorn, and their assistants were happy in the feeling that they had acquitted themselves like Prussians; all Frankfort was excited; and the regular mail from Berlin was expected about the middle of the day. The mail arrived, and in it was a letter from Fredersdorff, dated June 16th, containing orders from the king, who had just returned from his tour in the province of Prussia: —

"Upon his happy return from Prussia, his majesty has very graciously approved what you have done, according to his orders, with regard to M. de Voltaire. But, not to put any further obstacle to his projected journey to Plombières, his majesty permits him to proceed, on condition that he delivers to you in form a promise to send back faithfully the original of the book which belongs to his majesty, within a limited time, which shall be specified, without taking or permitting to be taken a copy of the same; and this upon his word as an honest man, and with the clause that, in case he shall fail in this, he will recognize himself in advance as his prisoner, in whatever country he may be. Be pleased, therefore, to present to him this promise, so conceived, and when he shall have written and signed it to let him depart in peace and with politeness. You will inform me of the result by the next courier. P. S. It is indispensable that M. de Voltaire should write entirely with his own hand, as well as sign and seal the form of engagement which you will present to him."

Surely, *now* the commodious traveling carriage may be ordered for three o'clock, and the prisoners rumble on to Mayence, a pleasant afternoon's ride in the long days of June. Not so. The attempt to escape was an audacity so flagrant, in the eyes of Freytag, that he deemed it due to the king's majesty to detain the prisoner until the king had been informed of it and had sent new orders. "If," said Freytag, "this man had waited a little, we could have let him go; but now it is our duty to wait, in all reverence, the requisition and

the very gracious further directions of the king." It was in vain to protest. Voltaire wrote to the Margravine of Bayreuth, asking her intercession. For the sake of his niece, he even appealed to the compassion of Freytag, and entreated him to let them go back to the Golden Lion. "We are very uncomfortable here, without servants, without help, surrounded by soldiers. We conjure you to ameliorate our condition. You have had the goodness to promise to take away this numerous guard. Suffer us to return to the Golden Lion upon our oath not to leave until his majesty the King of Prussia permits us. There is a little garden there, necessary for my health. All our effects are still there; we are paying for two lodgings."

Some mitigations of their lot appear to have been conceded by the Resident. Madame Denis and the secretary were allowed to go out, but they all continued to live at the Goat, where Voltaire was still closely confined to his room, and guarded by two sentinels day and night. Four days passed without further change. Then arrived from Berlin orders still more clear and positive to let them all go, the king being evidently impatient to be rid of the business, having other matters pressing upon him. But, alas! it now occurred to the anxious Freytag that when the king gave those orders his majesty had not yet heard of the flagrant attempt of Voltaire and his secretary to escape. Would he have given such orders if he had? Probably not, thought the sapient representative of the majesty of Prussia. At least, it would not become *him* to decide the question by enlarging the prisoner! The Resident therefore merely removed the guards, after exacting from Voltaire his parole not to leave his room. The great box was now opened, and the book of royal poetry taken from it. The two packets of manuscript were restored to their owner. Every object mentioned in the king's orders had been accomplished. The captive had been detained twenty-five days: twice the king had ordered his release; and still there he was, a close prisoner in one room of an inferior inn, watched by spies at every hour.

But, at length, this extreme indignity put upon a free city roused public indignation to such a point that the burgomaster and his colleagues in the city government showed some resentment at it. The magistrate called upon the prisoner. Gentle-

men attached to the court of the Prince of Meiningen were in frequent attendance, and testified their sympathy and indignation. The Resident, always alarmed, and now in extreme terror, allowed his captive "the liberty of the inn," and made attempts to come to a settlement with regard to the money which he had taken from him, from which all the expenses of the arrest and detention were to be deducted. There were fierce recriminations. Voltaire and Collini declare in the most positive manner, and in legal form, that money and valuable articles were stolen from them, — a thing likely enough during a five weeks' contention, in which so many irresponsible persons took part. It was not until July 5th, after a detention of thirty-five days, that orders came from the king so precise and peremptory that neither Freytag nor Schmid could find any reason or pretext for holding their prisoner longer. But the outraged poet came near providing them with something more than a pretext.

"The next day," continues Collini, "the 6th, we went back to the Golden Lion. Voltaire immediately summoned a notary, before whom he solemnly protested all the vexations and injustices committed against him. I also made my protestation, and we prepared for our departure on the morrow. A movement of vivacity on Voltaire's part came near retaining us longer at Frankfort and plunging us into new misfortunes. In the morning, before starting, I loaded two pistols, which we usually had in the carriage. At this moment Dorn stepped softly along the corridor and went past the room, the door of which was opened. Voltaire perceived him in the attitude of a man who was playing the spy. The recollection of the past kindling his anger, he seized a pistol and rushed toward Dorn. I had only time enough to cry out and stop him."

Dorn entered complaint against his assailant, but the secretary of the city contrived to "arrange" the matter, and, in the course of the day, July 7th, Voltaire, "his secretary and suite," left Frankfort, and reached Mayence the same day. Madame Denis remained at Frankfort one day longer, and then left for Paris, whence danger threatened.

During all this period of strife and excitement, Voltaire continued to labor steadily upon his "Annals of the Empire," aided by his secretary and copyist, and he made good progress

in the work. July 3d, two days before he was set at liberty, he wrote to the Duchess of Saxe-Gotha that, but for his detention, "our emperors would now be in their frames," and that, despite all hindrances, he had written nearly as far as Charles V. In other words, the hardest half of the work was done. This seems incredible; but, when all was over, we find him writing thus to his guardian angel, D'Argental: "From Gotha to Strasbourg, whether living with princes or jailors, whether in palaces or in prison, I have tranquilly labored five hours a day at the same work." Even in the agony of the strife with Freytag, he wrote very philosophically to the duchess. "History," said he, "is little more than a picture of human miseries. The adventure of my niece and myself is not worthy to fill so much as a little corner in the border of that picture; but the ridicule which is joined to the horror of it may save it some time from oblivion. The extreme of the ridiculous goes far. . . . For my own part, I deserve to be abandoned by France, since I abandoned the king, my master, — and a very good master, — for another; all my misfortunes are only my due. But, for my niece, who traveled two hundred leagues with a passport from her king, and who came to conduct to the waters a dying uncle, what a fatal recompense she receives for a good action!" He was fortunate in having upon his hands the only one of his immense series of works upon which he could have labored in such untoward circumstances.

The King of Prussia, as we see from his letters to his sister and others, had not then, and he never had, the least sense of the iniquity of the proceedings at Frankfort, nor the least belief in the acuteness of the sufferings they caused. He gloried in them, rather; he was not ashamed to have used his king's truncheon to avenge the scratches given by a light pen.

[Frederic to his sister of Bayreuth, June 16, 1753.] "I wish you, my dear sister, better luck than I have had with *messieurs les beaux esprits*. I do not believe that you have need of them to enlighten your mind. They would have more need of your wisdom. Madame du Deffand never wished to see Voltaire. They asked her why not. Because, said she, I buy his mind for two florins, and I enjoy his works without exposing myself to his malice."¹

¹ Voltaire and Madame du Deffand were familiar correspondents for forty-six years, and friends for half a century. Their published correspondence includes more than two hundred letters.

[From the Margravine of Bayreuth to her brother, the King of Prussia, June 29, 1753.] "I have just received a packet from Voltaire and Madame Denis, which I take the liberty of sending to you. I am annoyed that they apply to me; but, for fear of being compromised in this bad business, I send you, my dearest brother, what I have received from them. The letter of Madame Denis shows some skill and talent; it appears that she is not informed of the reasons which induced you to have her uncle arrested. If he had taken her advice he would have acted more wisely. I consider him the most unworthy and contemptible of men if he has been wanting in respect towards you in his writings or in his words; such conduct can only draw upon him the contempt of worthy people. A man intense and bilious as he is heaps folly upon folly when once he has begun. His age, his infirmities, and his reputation, blasted by this catastrophe, inspire me nevertheless with some compassion for him. A man reduced to despair is capable of everything. Perhaps, my dearest brother, you will think that I have too much indulgence for him on account of his genius; but you will not disapprove my having for him the pity which we owe to the guilty when they are wretched, and when even we are obliged to punish them. His destiny is like that of Tasso and Milton. They ended their days in obscurity; he may end his in the same way. If the effort which poets make in composing epic poems turns their heads, we had better be deprived of that kind of poetry in future."

[Frederic to his sister of Bayreuth, July 7, 1753.] "I have read the letter of Voltaire and la Denis; they lie, both of them, and do not testify justly. Their adventure is very different from what they say; but, despite all their misdeeds, I gave orders, fifteen days ago, to allow them to set out. You could not believe, my dear sister, to what a point those people can histrionize; all those convulsions, those maladies, those despairings, — all of it is nothing but a play. I was the dupe of it at first, but not at all at the end. *Voltaire dares not return to France*; he will go to Switzerland, and wander from country to country. For my part, I regard not the evil which he pretends to do me, but I have hindered him from doing me any more; and for this reason I made him give back my verses and all the letters I have written him."

The public indignation gave the dull and timorous Resident much uneasiness, and he wrote to Berlin for comfort. He feared he had gone too far, and had laid himself open to hostile action on the part of the burgomaster and his colleagues. The King of Prussia, in the most formal and emphatic man-

ner, justified and applauded all that Freytag had done in his name. Fredersdorff wrote thus to the Resident, July 14, 1753, a week after Voltaire's departure: —

“ You did nothing except upon royal order, and you executed it in such a way that his majesty is satisfied with your conduct. You have nothing to fear from the magistracy of the city, since you acted only upon the directions of your sovereign and as a personage having a royal character; and this you can declare openly. As to Voltaire, he is a man without honor. His majesty does not wish to commit himself with him in any way, and now that he has delivered the objects sought, let him go wherever he pleases. If he is at Frankfort still, let him cry out at his ease; and you are no more to enter into explanations with him, as to your conduct, than with the magistracy. But you can tell him to his face that it is useless for him to assume the rank of Gentleman of the Chamber to the King of France, and that if he does so at Paris the Bastille will be his recompense. You have acted like a faithful servant of the king and according to his order, and the lies and calumnies of Voltaire find credence neither here nor elsewhere.”

This is explicit enough. We may say also that it was due to Freytag, who knew not what he did, and who was confused by blundering, hasty, incomplete orders from the capital. Frederic amused himself, moreover, with attempting to express in epigrams his aversion to his old friend and master, whose funeral eulogium he was destined to pronounce before the Berlin Academy: —

ÉPIGRAMME CONTRE VOLTAIRE.

“ Voltaire, des neuf Sœurs l'indigne favori,
Est enfin démasqué. Détesté de Paris,
On le brûle à Berlin, on le maudit à Rome.
Si pour être honoré du titre de grand homme
Il suffit d'être fourbe et trompeur effronté,
Avec la Brinvilliers son nom sera cité.”¹

Some months later, on hearing a report of Voltaire's recovery from a dangerous illness, the King of Prussia achieved the following: —

¹ 14 Œuvres de Frédéric, 170. Voltaire, unworthy favorite of the Nine Sisters, is at length unmasked. Detested at Paris, he is burned at Berlin, cursed at Rome. If to be honored with the title of great man it suffices to be a cheat and an impudent deceiver, with the Brinvilliers [noted poisoner of Paris] his name will be cited.

EPITAPH DE VOLTAIRE.

" Ci-gît le seigneur Arouet,
 Qui de friponner eut manie.
 Ce bel-esprit, toujours adrait,
 N'oublia pas son intérêt,
 En passant même à l'autre vie.
 Lorsqu'il vit le sombre Achéron,
 Il chicana le prix du passage de l'onde,
 Si bien que le brutal Caron,
 D'un coup de pied au ventre appliqué sans façon,
 Nous la renvoyé dans ce monde."¹

These events made a lasting impression upon the people of Frankfort. Twenty years later, when the young Goethe was pressed by the Duke of Weimar to come and reside near his court, his solid old father offered many objections, as Goethe tells us in one of the most pleasing passages of his Autobiography. The old man was hardly a match in argument for his gifted son, aided as he was by a fond mother and a pleading sister. "He was in the habit," says Goethe, "of saving his most stringent argument for the close of the discussion. This consisted of a minute description of Voltaire's adventure with Frederic II. He told us how the unbounded favor, familiarity, mutual obligations, were at once revoked and forgotten; how he had lived to see the comedy out in the arrest of that extraordinary poet and writer by the Frankfort civic guard, on the complaint of the Resident, Freytag, and the warrant of the burgomaster, Fichard, and his confinement for some time in the tavern of the Rose on the Zeil. To this we might have answered in many ways, among others that Voltaire was not free from blame himself; but from filial respect we always yielded the point."²

¹ 14 Œuvres de Frédéric, 171. Here lies Lord Arouet, who had a mania for pilfering. This *bel-esprit*, always adroit, forgot not his own interest even in making the passage to the other life. When he saw the sombre Acheron, he so caviled about the fare that the brutal Charon, with a kick in the belly given without ceremony, has sent him back to us into this world.

² Autobiography, Book xv.

CHAPTER XIII.

DRYING AFTER THE WRECK.

MAYENCE on the Rhine, the birthplace and home of Gutenberg, was a populous and important city, with a large garrison, a numerous resident nobility, and a château on every commanding site of the adjacent country. Here he remained three weeks, "drying his clothes wet in the shipwreck."

The polite inhabitants of the place and its neighborhood, princes, nobles, officers, ladies, hastened to offer him their homage, and console him for the indignities he had suffered. The King of Prussia was not lord paramount at Mayence, and the sympathies of the people had free play. He paid many visits in return. Several *fêtes* were given him in that festal season; his spirits revived, and he entered into the gayeties of the time with much of his wonted zest. Nor did he fail to do his regular five hours' daily work upon the Annals, for which the large collections of that ancient stronghold afforded material. In five weeks after leaving Frankfort, he finished his account of the important reign of Charles V., which fills a hundred printed pages of a large volume. "From court to court, from inn to inn," he wrote to his "incomparable duchess," "I have borne in mind that I was under orders to Madame the Duchess of Saxe-Gotha. I travel with books, as the heroines of romance traveled with diamonds and dirty linen." The work which *she* had commanded, he assured her, "made him forget all the Freytags." He said his present way of life reminded him of those knights-errant who passed from an enchanted palace to a cave, and then, all of a sudden, from the cave to an enchanted palace.

But he did not forget the Freytags; he never forgot them. The recollection of what he had suffered at Frankfort rankled within him all the longer because, as he often said, he had not an army of a hundred and fifty thousand men with which to

set himself right with the perpetrator. Like a defeated king, who cannot fight, he was now compelled to negotiate, and to reach his powerful foe by artifice. It was an alarming thought that "one word" from the King of Prussia could close France to him, perhaps forever; nay, the known anger of the king against him might suffice, without a word. As soon as he was settled in Mayence, and had spread his clothes upon the rocks to dry, he wrote one of those letters, so numerous in his correspondence, which were designed to be shown. It was addressed to Madame Denis, July 9th, two days after he had parted with her, and was doubtless intended to be lent to Lord Keith, Frederic's ambassador in France, with the expectation that he would send a copy to his king. This letter I give entire, by way of exhibiting the straits to which kings may be reduced who have no armies, and as a specimen of Voltaire's skill in roundabout diplomacy. Though designed to be shown, it was to be shown to persons acquainted with the facts, and it is, upon the whole, a moderate and just presentation of them:—

VOLTAIRE TO MADAME DENIS.

[Mayence, July 9, 1753.] "It is three or four years since I shed tears, and I felt sure that my old eyes would never know that weakness again before they were closed forever. Yesterday the secretary of the Count de Stadion found me bathed in tears; I wept both your departure and your stay. While you were with me the atrocity of what you suffered lost its horror; your patience and courage gave me patience and courage; but after your departure I have no longer been sustained.

"I believe it is a dream; I believe that all that passed in the time of Denys of Syracuse. I ask myself if it is really true that a lady of Paris, traveling with a passport of the king, her master, was drawn along the streets of Frankfort by soldiers, taken to prison without any form of accusation, without a *femme de chambre*, without a servant; having at her door four soldiers with fixed bayonets, and obliged to suffer a clerk of Freytag, a scoundrel of the lowest species, to pass the night alone in her chamber. When the woman Brinvilliers was arrested, the executioner was never alone with her; there is no example of an indecency so barbarous. And what was your crime? To have traveled two hundred leagues to conduct to the waters of Plombières a dying uncle whom you regarded as a father.

"It is very sad, doubtless, for the King of Prussia not yet to have

made reparation for that indignity committed in his name by a man who calls himself his minister. His treatment of me was bad enough: he had me arrested in order to recover his book of printed poems, which he had given me, and in which I had some rights, he left it with me as the pledge of his favor, and as the recompense of my pains. He wished to take back that gift; he had but to say one word. There was no occasion to imprison an old man going to take the waters. He could have remembered that, for more than fifteen years, he had courted me by his seducing favors; that in my old age he had drawn me from my country; that I had labored with him for two successive years in perfecting his talents; that I had served him well and failed him in nothing; and that, finally, it was far beneath his rank and glory to take part in an academical quarrel, and to end our connection with no other recompense than demanding his poems from me by soldiers. I hope that he will feel, sooner or later, that he has gone too far, that my enemy has deceived him, and that neither the author nor the king ought to cast so much bitterness upon the end of my life. He has taken counsel of his anger; he will take it of his reason and his goodness. But what will he do to repair the abominable outrage permitted in his name upon you? My Lord Maréchal [Keith] will doubtless be charged to make you forget, if it is possible, the horrors into which a Freytag plunged you.

“Some letters have been sent to me here for you, and there is one from Madame de Fontaine, which is not consoling. It is always maintained that I have been a *Prussian*. If it is meant by that that I responded by attachment and enthusiasm to those singular advances which the King of Prussia made me during fifteen successive years, they who call me *Prussian* are very right; but if it is meant that I have been his subject, and that I ceased one moment to be a Frenchman, they are deceived. The King of Prussia never pretended and never proposed it. He gave me the chamberlain’s key only as a mark of favor, which he himself called frivolous in the verses which he composed for me when giving me that key and that cross, which I respectfully returned to him. That required neither oaths, nor duties, nor naturalization. A man does not become the subject of a king by wearing his order. M. de Couville, who is in Normandy, has still the chamberlain’s key of the King of Prussia, which he wears like the cross of St. Louis.

“There would be much injustice in not regarding me as a Frenchman, since I have always kept my house at Paris, and have paid poll-tax there. Can it be seriously maintained that the author of the “*Age of Louis XIV.*” is not French? Would any one dare to say it before the statues of Louis XIV. and Henry IV.? I shall even add, of Louis

XV., since I was the only Academician who pronounced his panegyric when he gave us peace, and I even translated that panegyric into six languages.

“It may be that his Prussian majesty, deceived by my enemy and by an impulse of anger, has irritated against me the king, my master; but all will yield to the justice and to the greatness of soul of the Prussian king. He will be the first to ask of the king, my master, that I may be allowed to end my days in my native land; he will remember that he has been my pupil, and that I bring away nothing from his kingdom except the honor of having enabled him to write better than myself. He will be contented with that superiority, and will be unwilling to avail himself of that which his rank gives him to overwhelm a foreigner who has sometimes taught him, who has always cherished and respected him. I know not how to impute to him the letters against me which are current under his name; he is too great and too high to outrage a private person in his letters; he knows too well how a king ought to write, and he knows the importance of observing the proprieties; above all, he was born to make known how becoming goodness and clemency are. That was the character of our good king, Henry IV.; he was quick in his anger, but he recovered. Ill-humor lasted with him only for moments, and humanity inspired all his life.

“Such, my dear child, are the sentiments which an uncle, or, rather, a sick father, dictates for his daughter. I shall be a little consoled if you arrive at Paris in good health. My compliments to your brother and sister. Adieu. May I die in your arms, unknown to men and to kings!”

It is probable that this letter reached its destination,— the King of Prussia. It did not soften him toward the writer. If kings surpass the rest of us in the power to bear with composure other men’s pains, they have also an extreme susceptibility to pains of their own. Frederic never ceased to feel that, in all this coil with *messieurs les beaux esprits*, he was the unanimous forgiver of injuries. With regard to the lady in the case, Madame Denis, whom Freytag arrested, as he said, for fear she should “spoil his affair,” and get her uncle free, her sex was conclusive against her with the king. She was a woman; she was an impertinence and a bore. He never made her the least apology or reparation, and the mention of her name irritated him.

Madame Denis reached Paris in due time, and received her uncle’s long epistle of July 9th. As it was not written to be

answered, she did not answer it. Six weeks after, however, worn out with ceaseless efforts to set her uncle right with the French court, in which she then deemed herself not unsuccessful, she wrote to him thus:—

“I have scarcely the strength to write to you, my dear uncle: I make an effort which I could make only for you. The universal indignation, the horror, and the pity which the atrocities at Frankfort have excited do not restore me to health. God grant that my former prediction that the King of Prussia would be the death of you be not fulfilled in myself! I have been bled four times in eight days. Most of the foreign ministers have sent to inquire about me: it seems as if they wished to repair the barbarity practiced at Frankfort. There is no one in France — I say, *no one*, without a single exception — who has not condemned that violence, mingled with so much ridicule and cruelty. It creates deeper impressions than you believe. My Lord Maréchal (Prussian minister in France) has killed himself in disavowing, at Versailles and everywhere else, all that passed at Frankfort. He has assured every one, on behalf of his master, that the king had no part in it. But see what the Sieur Frédersdorff writes to me from Potsdam, the 12th of this month:—

“I declare that I have always honored M. de Voltaire as a father, being always ready to serve him. Everything that happened to you at Frankfort was done by order of the king. Finally, I wish that you may always enjoy prosperity without parallel.”

“Those who have seen this letter have been confounded. Every one says that you have no part to take but that which you are taking, — that of opposing philosophy to things so little philosophical. The public judges men without considering their rank, and before that tribunal you gain your cause. Both of us do very well to be silent; the public voice suffices us. All that I have suffered still increases my tenderness for you, and I should go to meet you at Strasbourg or at Plombières, if I could get out of my bed.”

She was sadly mistaken in supposing that no one in France failed to condemn the Frankfort proceedings. When she wrote those words on the 26th of August, the French cabinet had already disposed of Voltaire's case. They had determined to sacrifice him to the King of Prussia's resentment. August 8, 1753, the Marquis d'Argenson, a member of the cabinet, made the following entry in his diary: “Permission to reënter France is refused to M. de Voltaire. It is sought by this little article to please the King of Prussia, while displeasing him, as we do, in the principal things.”

The permission, as we see by the correspondence, was merely withheld, not refused; at least, for some months. Long he remained in doubt as to the intentions of the government, but dared not venture far across the border until he had received express permission, which did not come. For a year or two, it was the absorbing question with him whether he should be allowed to return to his house in Paris, or should be obliged to find an asylum elsewhere. Nothing, however, could depress him long, for he had found the philosopher's stone. "I have always had it for a maxim that occupation and labor are the only resource against misfortune." So he wrote to his Duchess of Saxe-Gotha about this time.

Three festive, consoling, laborious weeks he passed at Mayence. His clothes being well dried there, once more he resumed his journey toward Strasbourg. Before leaving Potsdam he had been invited by Charles-Theodore, the Elector-Palatine, to visit his dominions, and, accordingly, he next halted at the agreeable city of Mannheim on the Rhine, the capital of the Palatinate. Upon this part of his journey Collini gives us some interesting details, recorded only by him.

"We left Mayence for Mannheim on the 28th of July. Upon discovering the ruins, which still existed at that time in the Rhine Palatinate, at different points, where the French under Marshall Turenne had burned and ravaged, Voltaire cried out, 'It is impossible that our nation can be loved in this country; for these devastations must, without ceasing, recall the inhabitants to the hatred of the French name. My friend, let us give ourselves out here for Italians.' Accordingly, at Worms, where we slept, he pretended to be an Italian gentleman. The innkeeper, who spoke a little Italian, talked with him while we supped. Voltaire abandoned himself to his natural gaiety, made the man believe a thousand singular things, and rendered the supper very diverting. He was no longer the Voltaire of Frankfurt. His fertile imagination always came to his assistance, and softened the bitterness of his humiliations. Sixty years of persecution did not give him a single headache. His state of indisposition was a natural and permanent one, which accompanied him from the cradle to the coffin. The letters which he wrote to his friends always spoke of the maladies which overwhelmed him, and in this respect he deceived no one; nevertheless he lived on from day to day, forgetting his pains and his diseases in work, — a remedy known only to Voltaire, — and deceived unceasingly people who in society and in the

newspapers spoke of him as dying or dead. Those who judged him by the habits of the generality of men deceived themselves and deceived others. Voltaire in his working-room was not the Voltaire whom the public imagined.

“The next day, early in the morning, we arrived at Mannheim, then the residence of the Electors-Palatine. The court was still to be for some time at Schwetzingen, the country house of the sovereign. Voltaire, finding himself so near his native country, and secure from observation, spent some days in putting his affairs in order. He arranged his papers, and changed into French currency the money rescued from the Frankfort shipwreck. A Jew, who did not forget his own interest, negotiated this business.

“As soon as the Elector, Charles-Theodore, had learned the arrival at Mannheim of the illustrious voyager, he hastened to send one of his carriages to convey him to Schwetzingen. There he and all his suite were entertained, and he had no other table than that of the sovereign. This court was then one of the most brilliant in Germany: festivals followed festivals, and good taste gave them an agreeableness always new. Hunting, comic opera, French comedies, concerts by the first performers in Europe, made the electoral palace a delightful abode for strangers of distinction or merit, who, besides, found a welcome most cordial and flattering. I did not then foresee that one day I should be settled there, and become the manager of those festivals which I admired.

“All the actors of the French company came in a body to present their homage to the celebrated man who had extended their art by so many masterpieces. They asked permission to come to him for the purpose of taking lessons from him upon the spirit of their *rôles*, and upon declamation. Nothing could please him more than to be consulted upon matters relating to the theatre, and especially upon his own works. He gave instructions which worked a great change in the actors; his rooms at the palace became the temple of Melpomene.

“Of all the various pursuits to which he owed his glory and his dearest delights, the drama was the one which absorbed him most, and which had an ascendancy over his mind which nothing could ever weaken. To science, to history, to theology, to romance, he gave only, as it were, some moments of caprice; while forty dramatic works attest the persistence of a true passion. He surrounded himself with everything that could nourish this passion. Individuals who showed talent for declamation, as well as those who made the theatre their profession, were received into his house with the esteem and regard due to merit. He did not share with his century that frightful prejudice which degraded and debased a man whose vocation it is to pro-

cure for us an amusement so proper and so full of charms that it has become a necessity to us.

“*Fêtes* and plays were not the only attractions of the electoral court. A nobler passion then occupied also the leisure of the sovereign of that beautiful country. Mannheim was the asylum of the sciences and the fine arts; learned men and artists were protected and encouraged there. Every day, after dinner, Charles-Theodore had a conversation in his cabinet with Voltaire, who read one of his works, and they conversed together upon literature. To give the elector an idea of his method in writing the ‘Annals of the Empire,’ he communicated to him the part of his manuscript which treated of the reign of Charles V.

“Charles-Theodore wished that Voltaire should visit, before leaving, the galleries and collections he had formed in the palace at Mannheim. A carriage conveyed him, and I went with him. He examined with attention the beautiful library of the elector, the gallery of pictures, that of the antiques, and the cabinet of medals. He beheld with astonishment all that this prince had done in so short a time for the progress of the sciences. It was on this occasion that he offered to the library the companion to that unfortunate book of poetry which he had been forced to give up at Frankfort, the title of which was ‘Memoirs for the History of the House of Brandenburg.’

“Voltaire passed fifteen days at Schwetzingen, fêted, sought after, and overwhelmed with attentions. When we set out from Schwetzingen, his highness made him promise to return as soon as he could. He kept that promise better than the one he had given Frederic. He returned five years after. We slept on the 15th of August at Rastadt, and the next day we arrived, by way of Kehl, at Strasbourg. We alighted at a little tavern bearing the sign of the White Bear.

“It was thought extraordinary that he should take lodgings at an inn little known, and situated in the worst quarter of the city, while there were at Strasbourg famous hotels, where rich travelers were accustomed to lodge. Suppositions and conjectures were not wanting upon this occasion; finally, after much discussion, people agreed that Voltaire was a miser. I confess that this tavern of the White Bear did contrast a little with his stately mode of traveling; but we shall now see how wrong it is to put faith in appearances, and how extremely careful we should be not to judge the actions of men upon simple conjectures. What passed for a proof of avarice was, in fact, only a consequence of the goodness of his heart. One of the waiters of the Emperor inn at Mayence had served us with extreme assiduity. His zeal and good manners gained him the favor of Voltaire. This waiter was from Strasbourg. He told us that his father kept in that city the

White Bear tavern, and entreated us to take lodgings at it. This attention of a son for the author of his being touched my illustrious traveling companion, and he promised what was asked of him. He hoped also, by stopping there, to get more customers for the inn.

“We had been some days at the White Bear when we made the acquaintance of M. Defresney, son of the postmistress of Alsace, a young man full of intellect and imagination. Voltaire greatly enjoyed his society, and they often talked together of the pleasure of living in the country. M. Defresney proposed to him to occupy a little house just out of the city, near the Jew’s Gate, attached to which was a large vegetable garden. This little house belonged to Madame de Léon, who had given permission for Voltaire to occupy it. The offer was accepted, and we took possession August 21st.

“All that Strasbourg contained of persons distinguished by birth or talent, as well as all foreigners of mark, came to visit Voltaire in his modest hermitage, and he experienced in this half solitude a satisfaction which he had not felt in several years. He found himself once more upon French territory; those who crowded to visit him brought with them polite manners and the national tone. He was regarded everywhere as an illustrious fellow-citizen, the ornament and pride of his country. In Germany he was, if I dare so express myself, only an exotic Voltaire [*Voltaire forcé*], and the distinctions with which the great honored him in that country could not have for him the value and the charm which the esteem of his own countrymen possessed.

“He continued in this country-house the ‘Annals of the Empire.’ The Countess of Lutzelbourg lived in retirement at her château upon the isle of Jar, near our abode. He went sometimes to pass the evening there, which refreshed him after the most painful labor he ever undertook.

“The celebrated Schoepflin [German historian of great learning] was then living at Strasbourg, and Voltaire desired to consult upon the history of Germany a professor who had gained renown as a historian. He drew from him precious suggestions for his work. The author of the Annals proposed that he should read the work as far as it was written, and indicate his comments. Schoepflin, too much occupied with the duties of his professorship, could not accept the offer, and advised him to apply to Professor Lorentz. That professor undertook with pleasure the task of examining the manuscript, and of removing the errors which could not but disfigure the work, begun to please the Princess of Saxe-Gotha, and written rapidly amid the disorder and mishaps of our journey.

“Voltaire’s plan now was to stop in Alsace until he had irrevocably fixed upon the place of his retreat; and that depended upon the news

which his niece might send him from Paris. She employed the influence of his friends in ascertaining the intentions of the king with regard to her uncle, and in procuring for him the privilege of living in peace in his own country. She loved him with the tenderest regard, and her desire was to live with him at the capital. She put forth the most zealous endeavors to succeed in this scheme; but she found many obstacles. Some scrupulous and timid souls dreaded the presence of Voltaire. The faction of the priests was the most envenomed and the most powerful. He received from her the exact detail of all that she did, and nothing yet announced that he could continue his journey toward the interior of France. Obligated thus to remain in Alsace, he decided to go and live for the present at Colmar. The brother of Professor Schoepflin had some printing-presses there, and he offered to print the 'Annals of the Empire,' now approaching completion. This offer was accepted, and we made at once our preparations for removal. October 2, 1753, we left Madame de Léon's house, and reached Colmar (forty-one miles distant) the same day. Voltaire hired a suite of rooms in the house of M. Goll.

"Colmar afforded him the advantage of having one of his works printed under his own eyes. He found in the persons composing the sovereign council of Alsace agreeable society and literary resources. Here, too, as well as at Strasbourg, he could conveniently receive and wait for the result of his niece's negotiations. As soon as we arrived, the Annals (Volume I.) were given to the printer. . . . While waiting for the tidings that should fix his destiny, he took the resolution to set up housekeeping, which I was to direct. A young girl of Montbéliard, who spoke German and French, was our cook. Babet had some gayety, some natural liveliness of mind; she loved to talk, and had the art of amusing Voltaire. She paid him attentions, and had for him an attachment which servants do not ordinarily have for their masters. He treated her with kindness and cordiality. I often joked with Babet upon his ardor [*empressement*]. She would reply with a laugh, and pass on. Our way of life was peaceful and uniform. The great man whose companion I was had a feeling heart, an equal and tolerant mind, whose temper trouble could never sour. With such qualities, he maintained in his house domestic concord, a thing essential to the happiness of private life. Generally I played chess with him after dinner. Some friends, advocates, and counselors to the sovereign council of Alsace, formed his ordinary society."

This eventful and exciting journey of seven months restored his spirits and benefited his health. His fifteen days' stay at the electoral court revived his life-long love of the drama, which, as Collini truly says, was always his favorite pursuit.

The drama was in peculiar vogue at Mannheim, a city destined to furnish a home and congenial employment to the unborn Schiller, whose first play, "The Robbers," was to be originally presented at the Mannheim theatre. During Voltaire's visit, the Elector exhibited all the resources of his dramatic company. "He paid me the gallantry," wrote the poet to his guardian angel, "of having four of my pieces played. That reanimated my old *verve*; and I have set myself, dying as I am, to draw up a plan of a new piece ('Orphelin de la Chine'), all full of love. I am ashamed of it; it is the reverery of an old fool." This play was an additional alleviation; for he could compose verses with delight when he could not get out of bed, and he could correct them as long as he could hold a pen.

CHAPTER XIV.

THREATENED ON EVERY SIDE.

HE was settled, then, for the winter at ancient Colmar, in Alsace, a familiar province to him from of old. He had frequently traversed this region with "Emilie," and he still had a considerable sum of money invested there. Lunéville, the seat of King Stanislas, so fatal to her, was within a day's ride, and Cirey itself could be reached in two days. Colmar, at that time, was not a manufacturing town, the rivers near by not having yet been turned into water-power. It was then the law capital of that part of Alsace, the seat of its courts, the abode of its lawyers and judges. German was commonly spoken there; but French was the language of the educated and ruling classes. Voltaire chose the place for his temporary abode, not merely for the convenience of printing his *Annals*, but very much because he desired to consult the learned lawyers of Colmar upon the complex laws and ill-defined relations of that "Empire" whose history he was outlining.

For almost any other student of history in Europe Colmar would have been an agreeable and a safe retreat. To him what place on earth was safe? The Jesuits were powerful in Colmar; they were powerful as an order, and influential from the zeal and ability of some members. They had important establishments in and near the city, and expended a large revenue. Five years before, one of the Jesuit preachers closed a Sunday sermon with such a vigorous denunciation of Bayle's Dictionary, then in the lustre of a new and enlarged edition (six volumes instead of four), that seven men of Colmar brought out their Bayles that day into the public square and burnt them, along with several copies of D'Argens's "Jewish Letters." Voltaire had forgotten this, apparently, when he took up his abode at Colmar, and he was far from suspecting that he would be moved ere long to inform

the same D'Argens that the city was "half German, half French, and wholly Iroquois."

Foreseeing no molestation, he was soon immersed in his usual labors, — reading proof of his first volume, composing the second, writing articles for the Encyclopædia, sketching and rejecting plan after plan of his new tragedy, the "Orphan of China." D'Argental urged him to try once more his oft-tried expedient of putting between himself and his enemies another dramatic triumph; and never had there been such reason to make the public his friend as now, when he had no other friend that was strong. At other crises there had been a Prussia to retreat to, and a king to welcome him there. But now he was a sick, homeless old man, with a pen and a purse, against everything on the continent of Europe that wielded material power. He wooed with all the ardor of other days the happy inspiration which had given "Zaïre" to the stage, but not, at first, with much success. "My poor little genius," he wrote to D'Argental, in October, 1753, "can produce off-spring no more. . . . I have drawn up four plans, completely arranged, scene after scene; neither of them seemed to be tender enough. I threw them all into the fire." He succeeded better after further trials, and his Orphan grew under his hands. Articles for the Encyclopædia were better suited to the distraction of settling in a new abode. He wrote to D'Alembert in the same October: —

"I have obeyed your orders as well as I could; I have neither the time, nor the knowledge, nor the health, to work as I could wish. I offer you these essays only as materials for you to arrange according to your own judgment in the immortal edifice which you are raising. Add, retrench. I give you my pebbles to stick into some corner of the wall. . . . It is grievous that philosophers should have to be theologians. Oh, try, when you get as far as the word *THOUGHT*, to say, at least, that the doctors know no more how they make thoughts than how they make children. Fail not, at the word *RESURRECTION*, to remember that St. Francis-Xavier raised from the dead eleven persons, by actual count. . . . A thousand compliments to your colleague [Diderot]. Adieu, Atlas and Hercules, who carry the world upon your shoulders."

Several peaceful weeks passed in that modest abode which

Babet enlivened and Collini described. The first volume of the Annals was printed, and twelve copies of the same (two bound, ten in paper) were "laid at the feet" of the Duchess of Saxe-Gotha, "to serve for the education of Monseigneur her son, and to amuse the leisure of his august mother." The author told her he would have had them all bound, but for his "impatience" to send her this mark of his homage. She replied with something more than gracious words; she sent him a draft upon her bankers at Frankfort for a thousand louis d'or. He would not accept it; but it was difficult, at that time, for an author to refuse the gift of a princess without offense. He wrote her an exquisite letter, entreating her to cancel the draft. "Madame," said he, "should the granddaughter of Ernest the Pious wish by her generosity to make me fall into the sin of simony? Madame, it is not permitted to sell sacred things." He calls upon the chief lady of her court to intercede for him, that he might be allowed to labor for her without reward. "Speak firmly. Say boldly to the duchess that my heart, penetrated with the most tender gratitude, absolutely cannot accept her benefits." The duchess yielded to his entreaties, and sent him, as a memento of her gratitude, a silver ewer.

She rendered him the further service of insisting on the necessity of his conciliating the King of Prussia. She softened the heart of the king toward him, and prepared the way for their final reconciliation. In reply to her advice on this subject, he wrote, "I know that it is needful to conciliate a man who is powerful and dangerous. This could be done easily if all the wrong had been on my side; but he feels that he has behaved ill, and, in order to justify himself, he makes the measure run over. He pretends to impute to me that letter of 1752, which describes his private life, and which was published at Paris while I was at Berlin. He knows well, at the bottom of his heart, that that letter, in which I am myself maltreated, cannot be mine."

He went further. He sent a copy of his Annals to the King of Prussia, with a letter, in which he begged the king to believe that he was not the author of the scandalous letter just mentioned. Frederic politely acknowledged the gift, and remarked that it was "beautiful to see a man, who was capable of producing works of genius, occupying himself with works

of pure utility. He discoursed also of the unhappy breach between them with candor and freedom:—

“ I have never believed that you were the author of the libels which have appeared. I am too familiar with your style and with your way of thinking to be so mistaken; and even though you were the author of them I should forgive you with all my heart. You ought to remember that when you came to Potsdam to take leave of me I assured you that I was willing to forget all that had passed, provided you would give me your word not to do anything more against Mauvertuis. If you had held to what you then promised, I should have seen you return here with pleasure; you would have passed your life tranquilly with me, and, in ceasing to disturb your own repose, you would have been happy. But your residence at Leipsic renewed in my memory the recollections which I had desired to efface from it. I took it ill that, notwithstanding the promise you had given me, you did not cease to write against Mauvertuis; and, not content with that, despite the protection which I accord, and am bound to accord, to my Academy, you wished to cover it with the same ridicule that you had so long labored to cast upon the president. These are the grievances I have against you; for, as to myself, personally, I have none. I shall always disapprove what you did against Mauvertuis; but not the less shall I recognize your literary merit. I shall admire your talents, as I have always admired them. You honor humanity too much by your genius for me to be indifferent to your destiny. I could wish that you would free your mind of these disputes, which ought never to have occupied it, and that, restored to yourself, you would be, as you were formerly, the delight of whatever society you frequent. Upon this, I pray God to have you in his holy and worthy keeping.”

This was not a soothing letter. If the King of Prussia exacted a promise from Voltaire not to tease a poor president any more, surely he was bound to keep the president from writing Voltaire a defiant letter, threatening him with personal violence, and making painful allusions to past experiences of the same nature. The king made no apology to Madame Denis, and spoke of “these disputes” in a manner most aggravating to one who deemed himself, and who really was, the defender of a deeply injured man of learning. “These disputes!” Voltaire frequently spoke in this light tone of Frederic’s differences with his royal and imperial neighbors. We all regard in that way other people’s disputes: but not so do we estimate our own august and sacred strifes. It was a

king, however, who wrote this letter, and Voltaire could not argue the matter with him. Moreover, he was relieved to be able to infer that it was not Frederic of Prussia who was opposing, or would oppose, his return to his native city.

The king hit upon a singularly happy expedient for setting himself right with the "philosophers" of Paris. It was during this spring of 1754 that he settled upon the worthy D'Alembert that pretty little pension of twelve hundred francs per annum, which exactly doubled the recipient's revenue. Madame du Hausset, *femme* to Pompadour, has recorded the scene which took place in madame's boudoir when the King of France told the story of this pension, and read the letter of Frederic to his ambassador in which his intention was communicated. Louis XV. entered the boudoir with the letter in his hand, and said in a mocking tone, —

"The King of Prussia is certainly a *great* man! He loves men of talent, and, like Louis XIV., desires to make Europe resound with his benefactions towards the learned of other countries."

Then, holding up the letter, and showing it to the persons present, he continued, "Here is a letter from him addressed to Lord Maréchal, ordering him to notify a *superior* man of my kingdom of a pension which he has accorded him. These are the king's words: —

"'You must know that there is a man in Paris of the greatest merit who does not enjoy a fortune proportioned to his talents and character. I could wish to serve as eyes to the blind goddess, and to repair, at least, some of her injustices: and for this reason I desire you to offer him the pension which I have named. I flatter myself that he will accept this pension in consideration of the pleasure it will afford me to oblige a man who, to loveliness of character, joins the sublimest qualities of mind!'"

Here the king stopped. Two other courtiers entered, and he began to read the letter over again, for their benefit, in the same style of mock admiration. When he had finished reading it, he said, "The letter comes to me from the minister for foreign affairs, with a petition that I permit this sublime genius to accept the pension. But how much do you suppose it amounts to?" Some guessed six, some eight, and some ten

thousand francs per annum. "You are mightily mistaken," said the king, with triumphant scorn. "*Twelve hundred francs!*" "That is certainly not much," said a courtier, "for sublime talents; but literary men will trumpet the benefaction throughout Europe, and the King of Prussia will have the pleasure of making a great deal of noise at a very little expense."

The *amount* of this pension, so derided by Louis XV., was, indeed, a very happy hit between the trifling and the oppressive. It was exactly suited to the circumstances and the character of D'Alembert; for who was D'Alembert?

On a certain day in November, 1717, a policeman, going his rounds in Paris, not far from the grand entrance to the cathedral of Notre Dame, found upon the steps of a chapel a basket with a new-born baby in it. The clothing of the child showed that it came from a wealthy house, and so, instead of taking it to the Foundling Asylum, he confided the little creature to a glazier's wife named Rousseau, whose husband's shop was near by. There was probably something in the basket which indicated the origin of the child; for in a few days the father, learning that the child had been abandoned, settled upon it an income for life of twelve hundred francs a year. The child grew up to be D'Alembert. Fortunately, the glazier's wife was one of the kindest of women, although entirely illiterate; and, loving this child with the affection of a mother, she took great care of it, and was indeed a true mother to it all the days of her life. When he had become a famous author, Madame de Tencin, a fine court lady, as well as a celebrated authoress, came forward and avowed herself his mother. He rejected her, saying, —

"You are only my step-mother. My nurse, the glazier's wife, — it is she who is my mother."

Upon leaving college his pension, small as it was, gave him the choice of his career, because it gave him the command of his time. Being alone in the world, having no relations who would acknowledge him, or whom he would acknowledge, he returned to his old home in the modest abode of the glazier's family. A powerful motive to this was the fact that the money which he could pay for his subsistence would add materially to their ease and comfort. In that family, in the same humble and inconvenient house, in a poor street, he continued to re-

side for forty years, living always with the same frugality and simplicity, and pursuing profound studies with an assiduity seldom equaled. His good old nurse appears never to have suspected that he was a great man. To her he was always the fragile, good boy who needed her care.

At a very early age his mathematical writings made him famous throughout Europe; and, indeed, he was but twenty-three when his essay upon the Integral Calculus caused him to be elected a member of the French Academy of Sciences. It was three years after this when the scene occurred in the boudoir of Madame de Pompadour which is related above. Frederic had founded the Berlin Academy of Science, which was accustomed to award medals of honor to any one who had published anything meritorious during the year. In 1746, the medal had been awarded to D'Alembert for his "Discourse on the General Theory of the Winds;" and this it was which led the king to make inquiries concerning the character and position of the author. Upon learning his way of life, his simple habits, his elevation above all the ordinary ambitions, and his residence with the friends of his childhood, the king conceived the fortunate idea of contributing a little to the ease of his circumstances, and he selected this favorable time for putting his scheme into execution. It was an act that enables us to forgive Freytag's exploits at Frankfort, and probably enabled Voltaire to forgive them sooner than he otherwise could.

The business of publishing books was then, as before remarked, mere brigandage, as we can easily believe who still daily witness the spoliation of authors through the absence of international law. Before the first volume of the "Annals of the Empire" had been a month in existence, three unauthorized editions were announced, against which neither author nor publisher had any defense or redress. The popularity of his "Age of Louis XIV." had whetted the appetite of publishers. There was nothing then in the trade that was a surer speculation than an historical work with the name of Voltaire on the title-page; and this circumstance now led to a premature and lawless publication that closed the gates of Paris against the author for twenty-four years.

The reader has been informed that Voltaire and "Emilie" studied history together at Cirey, and that the most important

result of their studies was a work, gradually evolved and published piecemeal, upon General History. At first it was so entitled, but was finally called "Essay upon the Manners [*Mœurs*] of the Nations," in six volumes, giving Voltaire's view of man and his past doings upon the earth. The part in which there was most of the Voltairean spirit was the Introduction, a volume by itself, and bearing the same relation to the rest as Buckle's Introduction was meant to bear to that impossible "History of Civilization" which the English author hoped to complete in the short compass of a man's life-time. Some chapters of this Introduction had appeared long ago in the "Mercure;" portions of the manuscript had been given and lent to individuals, — to the King of Prussia, to the Duchess of Saxe-Gotha, to the Elector-Palatine, and others; and the whole had been left with derelict Longchamp to copy. In January, 1754, when Madame Denis, Richelieu, D'Argental, and all the author's friends were setting in motion every engine of influence to smooth the way for his return home, a private edition of this bold, enlightened, humane, suggestive work appeared in Holland. Two editions were speedily published in Paris, and the work was thus in a few weeks spread all over Europe.

It was a terrible blow to the author. There was scarcely one page of the work that did not contain a fact, a conjecture, a truth, an error, a jest, a sentiment, a principle, useful to man, offensive to Boyer of Mirepoix. In vain the author strove to parry the blow; in vain he sought to excuse himself for having rendered this great service to man and truth. The edition of course swarmed with errors, some typographical, some of the pirate editor, some of the author's own; it contained also perilous words and passages which had been modified or omitted in later manuscripts. Acting upon this circumstance, he disavowed the work, and, having procured his latest manuscript from Paris, he went before notaries with it, exhibited the discrepancies, and procured a notarial certificate of a character, probably, without example: —

"DECLARATION concerning a book entitled 'An Abridgment of Universal History,' attributed to M. de Voltaire. Jean Néaulme, publisher. The Hague and Berlin. 1753.

"This day, February 22, 1754, was present before the undersigned

notaries M. Frauçois-Marie-Arouet de Voltaire, gentleman-in-ordinary of the king's chamber, member of the French Academy, of those of Rome, of Boulogne, of Tuscany, of England, of Scotland, and of Russia, who showed us a manuscript, in folio, much worn by use, rebound in boards, which also appeared very old, entitled 'Essays upon the Revolutions of the World, and upon the History of the Human Mind, from the Age of Charlemagne to our own Days, 1740;' which manuscript the Sieur appearing before us said he had received yesterday, the 21st of the present month, from his library at Paris, in a parcel countersigned *Bouret*.

"He showed us in like manner a printed work in two volumes, 12mo, entitled 'Abridgment of Universal History from Charlemagne to Charles V. By M. de Voltaire. The Hague. Jean Néaulme. 1753.' And we recognized that the said Abridgment was in part taken from the manuscript of the said Sieur, as exhibited to us, in this, that both begin in the same way: *Several indefatigable spirits having, etc.*

"We also perceived the very great difference between the said manuscripts and the said printed book, in the following particulars:—

"(1.) We found on the first page of the manuscript, line 3, *Historians resemble in this some tyrants of whom they speak: they sacrifice the human race to a single man.*

"And in the edition of Jean Néaulme we found, *Historians, like kings, sacrifice the human race to a single man.*

"Upon which the author declared that, at suitable time and place, he would institute proceedings against those who disfigured his work in a manner so odious.

"(2.) Page 59 of the manuscript: *The King of Persia had a son who, having turned Christian, proved unworthy to be one, and revolted against him.*

"In the edition of Jean Néaulme, the following essential words are maliciously suppressed: *Proved unworthy to be one.*

"(3.) Page 46 of the manuscript, at the article 'Mahomet:': *The ordinary Turk, who does not see those faults, adores them, and the imans have no trouble in convincing people of that which no one examines.*

"In the printed work was substituted: *The ordinary man, who does not see those faults, adores them, and the doctors employ a deluge of words to palliate them.* The ill-design of putting doctors in the place of imans appeared obvious to us.

"(4.) Page 65 of the manuscript: *It was impossible not to revere an almost uninterrupted succession of pontiffs who had consoled the church, extended religion, softened the manners of the Goths, Vandals, Lombards, and Franks.*

“All this passage, which contains more than two pages, is entirely forgotten in the Holland edition, etc., etc., etc., etc.

“On account of which the author complains of the ignorance, as well as of the bad faith, of him who sold to Jean Néaulme a manuscript so different from the true one.

“The author informed us that he expects immediately from Paris the second volume of his manuscript, which is as thick as the first, and which ends at the time of Philip II. : and thus his genuine work is eight times larger than that which has been published under his name. We also compared the manuscript of the first volume with the edition of Jean Néaulme, and we did not find a single page in which there are not great differences between them.

“And the sieur, appearing before us, protested against the edition which Jean Néaulme has presumed to publish wrongfully under his name, declaring it surreptitious, condemning it as filled with errors and faults, and worthy of the contempt of all readers.”

He also addressed a public letter to the pirate publisher, of cutting moderation. “Your editor,” said he, “has found the secret of debasing a work which might have become very useful. You have gained some money, upon which I felicitate you.” But all was of no avail. The work was eagerly devoured; the hierarchy was deeply offended; and he was soon distinctly notified that he could not return to his home. The King of France, in the boudoir of his mistress, informed her that he “*did not wish Voltaire to come to Paris.*” She dared not interpose; she, the tolerated reprobate, could not make common cause with a reprobate not tolerated; and Madame Denis was duly informed of the king’s remark. Voltaire still hoped to change the king’s mind; but, at present, he was obliged to remain on the outermost edge of his country, uncertain whether even that poor privilege would be continued to him.

“As I have received no positive order from the king [he wrote to one of the ministers (Marquis de Paulmi, son of D’Argenson) February 20, 1754.], and as I do not know what he wishes, I flatter myself that it will be permitted me to carry my dying body where I please. The king has said to Madame de Pompadour that he does not wish me to go to Paris. I agree with his majesty; I do not wish to go to Paris, and I am persuaded that he will find it good for me to move about in the distance. I remit all to your goodness and your prudence, and if you deem it apropos to say a word on the subject to the

king at some opportune moment, and to speak of it as a simple thing which requires no permission, I shall be indebted to you for my life. I am satisfied that the king does not wish me to die in the Colmar hospital. In one word, I pray you to sound the indulgence of the king. It is most frightful to suffer all that I do for a bad book which is not mine. Deign to let me know if I can travel."

He might well be curious to know if he would be allowed to travel; for as soon as the Abridgment began to circulate in Colmar, cutting away the ground on which Jesuits and Jansenists equally stood, there was a movement among the Jesuits to expel him from the city. He knew how, by adroit appeals to Jesuit friends, to allay the rising storm; but the question was becoming serious: Whither could he go? Where could he live? What was to become of him?

For some time past, ever since his escape from Frankfort, he had had thoughts of abandoning Europe, and taking up his abode in the New World across the sea. Pennsylvania was then a name much honored in the circle of "philosophers," who had not forgotten the agreeable impressions left upon their minds by Voltaire's interviews with the English Quakers. He had since, as Thieriot mentions, begun a poem upon Philadelphia, and he rarely lost an opportunity of extolling the wisdom which welcomed to Pennsylvania men of every religion and of every sect; a policy that kept the broad Delaware alive with vessels laden with the stuff that great empires are made of,—men and women who practice virtue and use their minds. And now, to the lustre of this unique system of tolerance, was added a kind of glory little to be expected in a country only eighty years settled. It was in the summer of 1752 that Franklin flew his kite and brought down electricity from the thunder-cloud,—the crowning experiment of six years' ingenious, resolute investigation! Voltaire indulged a fancy of settling in this renowned province. "I will confide to you," wrote Thieriot to a friend in Martinique, "that, in 1753, Voltaire had the design to go and found an establishment in Philadelphia, which, from what I have heard of it, is worthy to be inhabited by philosophers."¹

The dread of crossing the ocean deterred him; so, at least, he says in the article "Quakers," of the "Philosophical Dic-

¹ 2 Mémoires sur Voltaire, par Wagnière et Longchamp, 538.

tionary," where he also recalls some of the facts and fictions that attracted him to Pennsylvania at this time. The reader may smile when he reads his vision of Philadelphia, and remembers that it was written when the province was torn with dissensions of the utmost conceivable virulence; the placid Franklin himself, for the only time in his public life, blazing up into just wrath at the insensate pride of the sons of William Penn.

"Of all titles [wrote Voltaire] the one I like best is that of Philadelphian, *ami des frères*. . . . I love the Quakers. Yes; if the sea did not cause me an insupportable sickness, it would be in thy bosom, O Pennsylvania, that I should finish the remainder of my career, if there is any remainder! Thou art situated at the fortieth degree, in a climate the most mild and favorable; thy fields are fertile, thy houses commodiously built, thy inhabitants industrious, thy manufactures esteemed. Unbroken peace reigns among thy citizens. Crimes are almost unknown, and there has been but a single example of a man banished from the country. He well deserved it: he was an Anglican priest, who, having turned Quaker, was unworthy to be one. This wretch was doubtless possessed of the devil; for he dared to preach intolerance. George Keith was his name; I know not where he has gone, but may all the intolerants go with him!

"So, of three hundred thousand people who live happily in Pennsylvania, there are two hundred thousand foreigners. For twelve guineas you can acquire a hundred acres, and within those hundred acres you are veritably king; for you are free, you are a citizen. You can do no harm to any one, and no one can do harm to you; you think what you please, and you say it without any one's persecuting you; the burden of imposts, continually doubled, you know not; you have no court to pay; you do not dread the insolence of a consequential subaltern."

This passage is doubtless a reminiscence of the time when he read Peter Kalm's account of the Quaker Areadia, and sat in his Colmar lodgings wondering where he should spend the remainder of his days, "if there was any remainder." He would not have stayed long in Pennsylvania. He had soon after a taste of a genuine Quaker from Philadelphia, and could form an idea how suitable a city full of such would have been to the least Quakerly man in the world. Claude Gay was the name of this Philadelphian. Hearing Friend Claude's knowledge and simplicity highly spoken of, he desired to see him,

and the Quaker reluctantly accepted an invitation to dine at his house. Pleased at first by the tranquil dignity of his guest, he soon regarded his sobriety as a kind of challenge to sport. The American permitted him to laugh with the utmost coolness, and the conversation turned upon the first inhabitants of the earth and the patriarchs. Voltaire uttered some witticisms upon the historic books of the Bible. Claude Gay discussed the subject without betraying emotion. Irritated by his coolness, the "vivacity" of Voltaire turned into anger, and, at last, the Quaker, rising from the table, said to him, —

"Friend Voltaire, perhaps one day thou wilt understand these things better; meanwhile, find it good that I leave thee. God preserve thee, and, above all, direct thee."

Then he set out without regarding any excuse. Voltaire, ashamed, pretending pressing business, withdrew to his room. So runs the tale, and it is more probable than many of the Voltaire anecdotes.¹

To return to Colmar. The bitterest drop in his cup during this period was a difference with his niece, Madame Denis, upon the subject of her expenditure of money in Paris. He could himself expend freely enough; but his liberality was that of a person who intends to retain the power to be liberal, while hers was the ordinary lavishness of a luxurious woman who is spending an uncle's money. She gave him hard words in return for his remonstrance. He objected, it appears, to her having helped herself to a sum of money which he had designed for another object, and he looked about for an agent in Paris who would transact his business there, as the Abbé Moussinot had done years before. How she resented this check upon her extravagance we learn from letters of Voltaire to D'Argental, written in March, 1754, — letters which show how serious and how critical his situation was at this moment.

"My dear and honored friend, I can but exhibit to you wounds which death alone can cure. Behold me exiled from Paris forever for a book which is certainly not mine in the state in which it appears, — for a book which I have reprobated and condemned so unequivocally. The declaration which I have had drawn up, seven

¹ Voltaire et Les Genevois, par J. Gaberel, page 20.

copies of which I sent to Madame Denis, will not reach the king, and I remain persecuted. This situation, aggravated by long maladies, ought not, I think, to be still further poisoned by the cruel abuse which my niece makes of my misfortunes. See the very words of her letter of February 20th :—

“‘Trouble has perhaps turned your head; but can it spoil the heart? Avarice pierces you; you have only to speak. . . . I took up the money at Lalen’s only because I imagined every moment that you would return, and because it would have appeared too singular before the public that I should have left it all, especially as I had said, at court and in town, that you had doubled my revenue.’

“Then she half scratched out, *Avarice pierces you*, and substituted, *The love of money torments you*.

“She continues, ‘Do not force me to hate you. You are the last of men in point of heart. I shall conceal the vices of your heart as I can.’

“Such are the letters which I have received from a niece for whom I have done all that I could do; for whom, as much as for you, I returned to France, and whom I treat as my daughter.

“She intimates to me, in her unworthy letters, that you are as angry with me as she is herself. And what is my fault? To have asked you both to unearth for me some agent, wise, intelligent, who could serve for her and for me. Forgive me, I entreat you, if I pour into your generous bosom my complaints and my tears. If I have been in the wrong, tell me so; I submit my conduct to you; it is from a friend like you that we ought to ask reproof when we have committed faults. Let Madame Denis show you all my letters; you will see in them only the excess of affection, the fear not to do enough for her, a confidence without limit, the desire to arrange my property in her favor in case I am forced to fly and my revenues are confiscated (a thing possible, and one which I have had reason given me to apprehend), an entire sacrifice of my own happiness to her happiness, to her health, to her tastes. She loves Paris; she is accustomed to have company at her house; her health has rendered Paris still more necessary to her. I have for my share solitude, misfortune, suffering; and I took comfort in the idea that she would remain in Paris, with a fortune sufficiently ample, which I assured to her,—a fortune much greater than that which I inherited from my father. Finally, my adorable friend, condemn me if I am wrong. I confess to you that I have need of a little patience; it is hard to be treated so by a person who was so dear to me. You and she alone remained to me, and I endured my misfortunes with courage, upheld by those two supports. You will not abandon me: you will preserve me a friendship with which you honored me when we were children together. Adieu, my

dear angel. I have allayed entirely the persecutions which fanaticism was about to excite against me, even in Colmar, with regard to that pretended Universal History; but I should have preferred excommunication to experiencing the injustice which a niece who stood to me as a daughter has added to my misfortunes."

This friend of fifty years wrote a letter of warm and tender consolation, by which Voltaire was greatly comforted. In his response, the beleaguered author gave a clearer view of his situation after forty years of toil in his vocation. He had learned from friends at court that the king had read the passage in the "pretended Universal History," in which kings were said to sacrifice the human race to the caprice of an individual.

"The king has read the passage [he continued], and that is enough. The passage is criminal; he has reason to be very much irritated by it; and he has not the time to read the incontestable proofs that it was falsified. There are fatal impressions which can never be obliterated; and all concurs to prove to me that I am lost without resource. I have made myself an irreconcilable enemy of the King of Prussia by wishing to leave him; the pretended Universal History has drawn upon me the implacable wrath of the clergy. The king cannot know my innocence, and hence it has come to pass that I have returned to France only to be exposed to a persecution that will outlast my life. Such is my situation, my dear angel, and I must not indulge in illusions with regard to it. I feel that I should have much courage if I had health; but the sufferings of the body lower the tone of the soul, especially when the exhaustion is such as not to permit the alleviation of labor. . . . It is in such a case that a family can serve as some resource, and that resource is taken from me."

"If I should seek an unknown asylum, and if I could find one, if it was believed that that asylum was in a foreign country, and if my seeking such a refuge was regarded as an act of disobedience, it is certain that my revenues would be seized. Who would prevent it? I have written to Madame de Pompadour, and I have told her that, having received no positive order from his majesty, — having returned to France only to go to Plombières, — my health growing worse, and having need of another climate, I trusted it would be permitted to me to complete my journey. I added that, as she had little time to write, I should take her silence for a permission to do so."

These letters suffice to present the material facts of his position at this time. Madame Denis did not long delay to reconcile herself with her uncle, to whom she was bound by interest

as well as by affection. Nor was the King of Prussia an active or a persistent enemy. The really serious danger was from Paris, where his enemies, numerous and powerful, needed but a scrap of writing and the king's signature to divert his annuities into the royal treasury. Bonds of the city of Paris yielded him 14,000 francs a year; Richelieu paid him an annuity of 4,000 francs, the Duke of Bouillon 3,250, his pensions amounted to more than 4,000. The income of which a fiat of the King of France could instantly and forever deprive him exceeded 60,000 francs per annum. It was much for a man of sixty to lose who had kings and hierarchies to contend with, and the proceeds of whose labor were a prey to every man in Europe who had a printing-press.

Marmontel, who then held an office at Versailles under Madame de Pompadour's brother, and lived in intimacy with her circle, testifies that she desired to end Voltaire's exile, but dared not interfere. "She interested herself for him; she sometimes inquired of me about him; and when I answered that it depended only on her to make her inquiries unnecessary she said, with a sigh, 'Ah, no; it does not depend on me.'"¹

¹ 2 Memoirs of Marmontel, 58. London, 1806.

CHAPTER XV.

HIS EXCLUSION FROM FRANCE.

IN this extremity he resorted to an expedient which carried belligerent rights to an extreme. Easy-going Catholics, who neglect the rites of their church during the rest of the year, are accustomed to confess and commune at Easter, and this concession suffices to keep them within the pale of the church. They who confess and commune at Easter may call themselves Catholics; they who omit to do so are reprobate. Hence, millions of non-religious Catholics, among whom were many unbelievers, conformed to this usage, the disregard of which would have subjected them to loss, inconvenience, or danger. Dissolute noblemen, like the Duke of Richelieu, would comply with the custom as an example, and because it was instinctive in feudal chiefs to ally themselves with the preachers of unreasoning obedience. Voltaire this year at Colmar resolved to comply also, and he executed his purpose with deliberation and completeness. Secretary Collini, to whom we are indebted for nearly all our knowledge of this event, informs us that he was moved thereto by the advice of friends in Paris; but, probably, he was not unwilling, while endeavoring to deprive his enemies of a weapon against him, to afford the world this signal proof of his contempt for what he esteemed barbaric rites.

“Madame Denis [says Collini] notified her uncle that watchful eyes were upon him from Versailles, that he had been followed everywhere since his departure from Brandenburg, that he was even closely observed on that frontier of France where he then was, and that he was regarded as an infected member of the flock, capable of communicating contagion wherever he should go. Some ministers of the altar took charitable pains to foment those fears. The question was to find a way of dissipating them.

“It was in the month of April; Easter was approaching. Spies

were already posted to see if Voltaire would fulfill at this festival the duties imposed by the church. His Paris friends were informed of the test by which he was to be judged,—a test more apt to lead a man to hypocrisy and profanation than to make a good Catholic of him. They made him aware of it, and persuaded him to yield to the necessity. They saw in this step an expedient to calm agitation, and obtain permission for him to return to the capital.

“Voltaire asked me one day if I was going to confess and receive the sacrament at Easter. I replied that such was my intention. ‘Very well,’ said he to me, ‘we will do so together.’ Everything was prepared for this ceremony. A Capuchin came to visit him: I was in his room when this monk arrived. After the first words I disappeared, and did not return till I learned that the Capuchin was gone. The next day we went to church together, and communed side by side.

“I confess that I profited by so rare an occasion to examine the countenance of Voltaire during this important act. God will pardon me this curiosity and my distraction; I was none the less devout for it. At the moment when he was about to receive the sacrament, I raised my eyes to heaven, as if in devotion, and I cast a sudden glance on Voltaire’s face. He presented his tongue, and fixed his eyes wide open upon the physiognomy of the priest. I knew those looks of his. On returning home, he sent to the convent of the Capuchins a dozen bottles of good wine and a loin of veal. On this occasion it was said at Paris that Voltaire had taken his first communion at Colmar.”

Just comment upon this painful scene is, happily, as needless as it would be difficult; for scarcely any reader would accept another person’s judgment upon it unless it accorded with his own. A countless multitude of virtuous and charitably disposed persons would instantly condemn it as a crime of immeasurable enormity; while others, not less virtuous and amiable, see in it merely an amusing device of a philosopher cornered by a band of “Iroquois,” furious to bind and burn him by a slow fire. Between those extremes every one who considers the matter will find ample standing-room.

It concerns us, however, to know what Voltaire himself thought of it. He thought it just as allowable an act as that of a farmer who lies to a furious bull by setting up in a field a stick with a hat and coat upon it. “I conceive,” he wrote to D’Argens, a few days before, “that a devil goes to mass when he is on papal ground like Nancy and Colmar.” On

another occasion he wrote to his "angels," "If I had a hundred thousand men, I know well what I should do; but as I have them not, I shall commune at Easter, and you shall call me a hypocrite as much as you please." And still later he wrote to D'Alembert, "What ought wise men to do when they are surrounded by insensate barbarians? There are times when it is necessary to imitate their contortions and speak their language. *Mutemus clypeos*.¹ For the rest, what I have done this year I have done several times before, and, if it pleases God, I shall do it again. There are people who are afraid to handle spiders; there are others who swallow them."

On this point his last secretary, Wagnière, has an anecdote. "What would you have done if you had been born in Spain?" Wagnière asked him one day. His reply was, "I would have gone to mass every day; I would have kissed the sleeve of the monks; and I would have tried to set fire to all their convents. I was not made to live in Spain, nor even in France." "And where, then?" asked Wagnière. "In England," was the reply.

At another time he expressed himself, if possible, still more plainly. Writing to the Marquis de Villevielle, he said, "When one is shut up between foxes and wolves, it is sometimes necessary to smoke out the foxes and howl with the wolves. There are things so contemptible that one can sometimes abase himself to them without compromise. If ever you should find yourself in a company where every one *montre son cul*, I advise you *mettre chausses bas* on entering, instead of making a bow."

So far as we can discern, this act had no results of any kind. It deceived no one; it was expected to deceive no one. Paris remained closed to him, and, if he had permission to go to Plombières, it was only that silent permission which he had sought from the king's mistress. Nor ought the reader to infer from his letters to D'Argental and from this compliance with the Easter customs of his country that he was dismayed or habitually dejected by the situation of his affairs. A man so absorbed as he was in a pursuit the most fascinating mortals know cannot be long cast down. The publication of part of his General History, and the rapturous welcome it re-

¹ 2 Æneid, V. 389.

ceived, revived his interest in the work, and he laid out the extensive scheme which resulted in the most voluminous and suggestive of all his prose writings. He saw an abundance of congenial work before him; he was the farthest possible from despair. Many of his letters of this spring are full of gayety and point, particularly those which he wrote to the Marquise du Deffand, upon whom had recently fallen, at the age of fifty-seven, the great affliction of blindness. He sent many a letter of badinage, anecdote, and criticism to amuse and cheer her. April 13th, a few days after the Easter communion, he wrote to her in his liveliest manner:—

“I think I advised you to go on living, if only to enrage those who pay your annuities. For my part, it is almost the only pleasure left me. As soon as I feel the symptoms of an indigestion, I say to myself, *Three or four princes will gain by my death.* Then I take courage from pure malice, and I conspire against them with rhubarb and sobriety.”

They had both known Lord Bolingbroke in their earlier years, and he touches in the same letter upon the Memoirs of that disappointing “philosopher,” just published:—

“I have read the Memoirs of my Lord Bolingbroke. It seems to me that he spoke better than he wrote. I confess to you that I find as much obscurity in his style as in his conduct. He draws a frightful portrait of the Earl of Oxford, without bringing against him the least proof. It was that same Oxford whom Pope styles a soul serene, above good and evil fortune, above the rage of parties, the lust of power, and the fear of death.

“Bolingbroke would have better employed his leisure in composing good memoirs upon the war of the succession, upon the peace of Utrecht, upon the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough, upon Louis XIV., upon the Duke of Orleans, upon the ministers of France and of England. He should have adroitly mingled his apology with all those grand subjects, and he would have immortalized it; instead of which, it is annihilated in the mutilated and confused little book which he has left us.

“I do not conceive how a man who had views so great could do things so little. His translator is exceedingly wrong in saying that I wish to proscribe the study of facts. I reproach M. de Bolingbroke with having given us too few of them, and with having strangled the few events of which he speaks. Nevertheless, I believe that his Memoirs have given you some pleasure, and that in reading them you have often found yourself on familiar ground.

“Adieu, madame; let us suffer our human miseries patiently. Courage is good for something: it flatters self-love, it diminishes evils; but it does not restore sight to the eyes. I always greatly pity you; your destiny afflicts me.”

Colmar continued to be his abode for thirteen months, during which he made some excursions from it. In the pleasant month of June, after this long winter of his discontent, he set out for Plombières, expecting to meet at that famous watering-place among the Vosges Mountains both his nieces and both his angels. Just as he was leaving Colmar, he received a note from Madame Denis informing him that Maupertuis was also going to Plombières, and that he must wait till the president had left the place, for fear of affording “an odious and ridiculous scene” to the idle water-drinkers. He started, notwithstanding, but halted half-way at the Abbey of Sénones, where his old friend, Dom Calmet still lived and labored among the twelve thousand volumes of the convent library. He spent three weeks at the abbey in friendly intercourse with the fathers, and in searching for historic truth among their books; not neglecting to correct the proofs of the second volume of his *Annals*, which Collini sent twice a week from Colmar. “I do not lose my time here,” he wrote from the abbey to D’Argental. “Condemned to labor seriously at this General History, printed to my injury, editions of which are multiplied daily, I could scarcely find greater assistance than in the Abbey of Sénones. . . . Do you know that I am not in France, Sénones being territory of the empire, and that I depend only upon the Pope for the spiritual? I read here, an ’t please you, the Fathers and the Councils.”

The secretary, we perceive, remained at Colmar to superintend the printing; and there was an active interchange of notes, proofs, messages, and parcels between them. It was no child’s play to be secretary to such an author, even with a copyist to assist; and poor Collini was sometimes at the end of his patience. Voltaire, he tells us, was a bad proof-reader; but he kept his secretary up to the desired degree of vigilance by incessant reminders and admonition. He rained notes upon him, half in French, half in English, half fun, half earnest, always keeping the tone of a friend who asks a favor, never obtruding the master. These sentences may give an idea of them:—

[June 9th.] "As I pass through Saint-Dié, I correct the page; I return it; I recommend to M. Collini the *lacunes* of Venice; he will have the goodness to have a *g* put, instead of the *e*. And those chevaliers who leave *son pays*,—one can of a *son* easily make a *leur*."

[June 7th.] "I must make you wait for the preface. . . . I have much at heart the copying of the manuscript of the history" [of Louis XV].

[June 23d.] "Have the two essential faults in the body of the work been corrected by hand? How goes the copy of the manuscript?"

[June 24th.] "I have at last received the large parcel. I retain the half leaf, or, rather, the whole printed leaf. I have found no mistakes, except my own; you correct proof better than I; correct the rest, then, without interference from me."

[June 26th.] "I pray you take the key of the closet in which there are some books. This closet is behind the bureau in the study, and the key of that closet is in one of the right-hand drawers of the bureau. You will find in it three copies of the "Age of Louis XIV." and of the Supplement, stitched in paper. I beg you to make a parcel of them, with this address: 'To Dom Pelletier, curate of Sénonés,' and give the parcel to the bearer. I embrace you."

[July 2d.] "In reply to yours of June 25th, I will say that I am not at all pressed or uneasy with regard to the copy you are doing; but I shall be very glad to find it finished on my return a month hence."

In these notes we see him managing and directing the whole business of publishing books: first, writing them; then, printing, binding, dedicating, distributing copies to powerful protectors; securing the good-will of ministers and censors; settling how many days it was best to send out presentation copies in advance, so as to enhance the compliment without running needless risk of a pirated edition; and, in short, arranging every detail with the prudence and assiduity of a man whose subsistence and chance of fortune depended upon the success of his enterprise. These labors were scarcely ever suspended for a whole day; for we find him correcting proofs in his carriage while the horses were changing, and availing himself of every chance detention to carry on some part of his work. Maupertuis bars the way to Plombières; Voltaire steps aside to this Abbey of Sénonés, where still the work goes on, and he has the pleasure, as he remarks, of "living upon the enemy," while forging new weapons to destroy him. Nothing could happen which he did not, sooner or later, turn to the ad-

vantage of his object. If he is sick, he can look over tedious volumes to see if they contain anything he wants; if he is pestered by Freytags, he can dictate catalogues of dates and names; if he is vigorous and buoyant, he can recast a scene of tragedy; if he is dispirited, he finds solace in "La Pucelle."

President Maupertuis at length took his departure from Plombières, and the good Doctor Akakia joyfully obeyed the summons to join his nieces and his angels. Three weeks of great happiness passed too rapidly away. Madame Denis and her uncle were better friends than ever; she consented to forsake all, even the charms of Paris, to share whatever asylum he might find for his declining years. She returned to Colmar with him, and ever after remained the mistress of his house.

Soon after his return to Colmar he had another paroxysm of alarm respecting that terrible "Pucelle" of his, of whom his princesses and duchesses were so enamored. Again there were rumors that the work was about to escape from secret recesses in ladies' boudoirs into the awful publicity of print. The poem could scarcely be more public than it was already; for it had been copied and recopied so industriously that manuscripts had been sold in Paris for as little as one louis d'or; and it was thought in 1754 that the copies and parts of copies then afloat numbered several hundreds. But it was not yet in print. A printed "Pucelle" was an indecorum; and, in the *régime* of the period, almost anything was permitted except an indecorum. His fright proved to be premature. But the time, he thought, could not be distant when a publisher would risk printing a work which so many desired to possess. "It is a bomb," he wrote in August, 1754, "which, sooner or later, will burst to crush me, and tragedies will not save me. I shall live and die the victim of my labors."

An agreeable event occurred in October. The favorite sister of Frederic of Prussia, the Margravine of Bayreuth, visited Colmar with her husband. They invited him to their hotel, and both of them strove by assiduous attentions to atone for Freytag and Frankfort. He hastened to communicate the pleasing news to the Duchess of Saxe-Gotha, to whom, perhaps, he owed this concession from the Prussian king: —

“Who was surprised on the 23d of this month? It was myself, madame, when a gentleman of the suite of Madame the Margravine of Bayreuth came to say to me that his august mistress expected me to supper at the Black Mountain, a poor tavern of the city. I rubbed my eyes; I believed it was a dream. I go to the Black Mountain; I find there the margrave and her royal highness. There are no kinds of attention which they do not heap upon me; they wish to take me to the banks of the Rhone, where they are going to pass the winter. The margravine absolutely wished to see my niece. ‘Yes, madame,’ said I to her, ‘she will have the honor boldly to present herself before you, although you are the King of Prussia’s sister.’ All went off in the best way in the world; the sister did what the brother ought to have done; she excused as well as she could, and with infinite goodness, the adventure at Frankfort.”

One more journey he was to perform this year. His friend and “protector” of forty years, the Duke of Richelieu, who had estates and a chateau near Lyons, urged him to visit that busy city on the Rhone, and engaged to meet him there. The distance from Colmar to Lyons is about two hundred miles, and the season was late for travel; but it was highly desirable for the gentleman-in-ordinary of the king’s chamber to consult with the first gentleman of the same upon his precise standing at court, and to learn what chance there was of his living unmolested in France. November 11, 1754, the traveling carriage, which we have accompanied all the way from Potsdam, stood at the door of Madame Goll’s house in Colmar, loaded as heavily as the great coach of Madame du Châtelet used to be when she rode from Paris to Cirey. Madame Denis was going, Collini was going, the copyist and the valet were going. The horses were harnessed, the vehicle was about to start, when one of those “vivacities” occurred which occasionally disturbed for a moment the tranquillity of this household. It is the secretary who tells the story:—

“The carriage seemed to the philosopher to be too heavily loaded, and he ordered that everything should be forthwith taken off, and nothing left except his own trunk and that of his niece. I carried with me only a small portmanteau, in which I had a dozen shirts and some necessary clothes. He sent word to me to sell the whole. The

proposition was that of a madman, and I went to him and said that his extravagances were insupportable, that I asked my discharge, and that I begged him to arrange my account. 'I am sorry,' said he, 'that you wish to leave me, and, as to our account, I owe you nineteen livres. Here they are,' and he put a louis into my hand. 'Monsieur,' said I, looking at the coin, 'I will send you your change of a hundred sous.' 'No, no,' said he. 'I ask pardon,' replied I; 'five livres are due to you.' 'I beg you,' said he, 'accept this trifle.'

"The opportunity appeared to me too good, and I declined it, protesting that he had been too generous toward me. I immediately left his room. His niece was near him; she appeared to speak a word to him; and, as I was about to enter the chamber which I had occupied in Madame Goll's house, I saw the philosopher running after me. 'Wait,' said he to me; 'as I do not know whether you have any money, nor what is to become of you, take this trifle also.' 'Monsieur,' replied I, 'I am not the least anxious as to what will become of me, and never have been with regard to money.' Nevertheless, he induced me to take the other louis d'or, and I thanked him for his generosity. He returned to his room. At the end of a quarter of an hour, one of the servants came to tell me that uncle and niece were talking of this adventure, which they feared would make some noise. I had scarcely heard this, when I saw the philosopher appear in my chamber. He induced me to repack my portmanteau, and to set out with them."¹

Peace being thus restored, the party rolled away from Colmar, and had an unusually merry journey of four days to Lyons, Voltaire being in exuberant humor after this momentary effervescence. Lyons, already the chief seat of French manufactures, was even then a very large city. The poet Gray, who visited it a few years before, describes it as the "second city of the kingdom in bigness and rank, its streets excessively narrow and nasty, the houses immensely high and large (twenty-five rooms on a floor and five stories high), and swarming with inhabitants, like Paris itself." "The people," he adds, "were too much engrossed in business to care much for their own or others' diversion." But this was in 1739. Voltaire had been incessantly employed ever since in awakening and nourishing the intellect of France, and Lyons now had its academy, its literary circles, its liberally-sustained theatre, its intellectual life.

Here Voltaire met his "hero," as he was accustomed to

¹ Lettres Inédites de Voltaire, de Madame Denis, et de Collini, page 174.

style the Duke of Richelieu, and passed five days in his society; after which he entered freely and gayly into the intellectual activities of the most intellectual of provincial cities. It now plainly appeared that the Court and the Mind of this beautiful kingdom of France were growing apart. Everything at Lyons which looked to the court for advantage eyed this portentous visitor askance, and treated him coolly; but, as often as he stood face to face with the public, he was welcomed with enthusiastic and apparently unanimous applause. Invited to a session of the Academy, he was received with every mark of distinction. Plays of his were produced at the theatre with boundless success, and when the author was seen in a box, the audience rose and gave him cheer upon cheer. His drawing-room reminded Collini of the time when, at Potsdam, princes, generals, and ambassadors crowded his antechamber. But when, attired in a court suit, and accompanied by his secretary, he rode in state to the levee of Cardinal de Tencin, Archbishop of Lyons (and uncle to his beloved angel, Count d'Argental), he had a very different reception.

"We traversed," says Collini, "a long series of rooms. His gout having weakened him, I gave him my arm to sustain him, and at last we reached Monseigneur's antechamber, which was full of courtiers of every kind. Voltaire is announced to the cardinal. He enters alone. A moment after, he comes out, takes my arm again, and we return as fast as we can to the carriage, without either of us uttering a word. 'A pleasant visit!' said I to myself. When we were in the carriage, Voltaire, a little absent-minded, addressed to me these words: 'My friend, this country was not made for me.' Soon after, he told me his excellency had said to him that he could not invite him to dinner, because he was out of favor at court; and upon hearing this phrase, so ridiculous and so worthy of a slave, he had turned his back to the prelate and left the room. He was received in much the same way by the officer in command of the troops at Lyons."

Voltaire himself confirms this narrative. "The cardinal," he says, "avowed to me in confidence that he could not invite me to one of his public dinners, because the King of France was angry with me. I told him I never dined; and as to kings, I was the man in the world who most easily took my

part with them, and as to cardinals, not less so." The Margravine of Bayreuth was then in Lyons, and, through her good offices, the cardinal received him a second time with the cordiality of other days.

It was, however, but too evident that he could be safe at present on no part of the territory of France, and the Duke of Richelieu was obliged to admit it. At Lyons, too, he had another panic about the "Pucelle," the burlesque which the same Richelieu had suggested to him at the supper-table a quarter of a century before. Some of the copies in circulation contained abominable things, inserted by unskilled hands to fill gaps in the work; and when an unskilled hand presumes to employ itself in composition of that kind the product differs from that of the master as Madame la Marquise de Pompadour differed from a painted woman of the streets. There were, moreover, in France, many parents who cared little for questions of theology, but knew that the passions of youth are ardent, and that no possible version of this poem was good for their sons and daughters to read. Manuscripts of the "Pucelle" for a *lonis d'or*! That appears to have turned the scale against him, since it gave to the government the support of a public opinion not artificially produced. To such persons as the Duchess of Saxe-Gotha and the Margravine of Bayreuth literature of that kind was a kind of fire which they could play with without immediate and deadly peril; but the class who are obliged to earn the subsistence of those sumptuous persons, as well as their own, must live and labor in some harmony with the nature of things.

December 10, 1754, after a residence of four weeks at Lyons, Voltaire and his party left that city, and journeying slowly toward the north, along the banks of the Rhone, with the Alps often in sight, reached Geneva, ninety-three miles distant, on the third day. It was in Switzerland that he sought an asylum, as the King of Prussia had predicted.

CHAPTER XVI.

TO SWITZERLAND.

VOLTAIRE, as Thieriot assures us, had meditated emigrating to Protestant America. Geneva, at that period, was a small America in the midst of Europe. He had reached an America without crossing the sea; for, surely, communities which are alike in religion and in politics, though an ocean rolls between them, are not far apart. The Swiss city, with its few leagues of adjacent country, was about as much an independent republic as one of the American colonies; and, as to its religion, a traveler from Calvinistic Boston says, "You would know the people of Geneva were Calvinists, whisking through the town merely in a *diligence*." ¹

The son of a Calvinist wrote these words as recently as 1833, nearly three centuries after Calvin had put his ineffaceable stamp upon the French refugees in the Swiss town. The dress, the faces, the manners, of the people all reminded this observing Bostonian of his native land. He noticed a certain "subdued decency," a "black-coated, straight-haired, saint-like kind of look, which is universal in the small towns of our country, and which is as unlike France and Italy as a play-house is unlike a Methodist chapel."

On the other hand, Geneva presented from of old the better characteristics of New England, among which were two of some value, namely, the general diffusion of knowledge and the general absence of degrading poverty. The poet Gray visited the city some years before Voltaire saw it, and he approached it by the Lyons road, as Voltaire did. He also records his impressions. Near the gates of Geneva rushes into the blue Rhone the little river Arve, separating it from Sardinia. On the Sardinian side of the torrent, according to the poet, nothing was to be seen but "meagre, ragged, barefooted peasants,

¹ Pencilings by the Way, by N. P. Willis. Letter 112.

with their children, in extreme misery and nastiness; and even of these no great numbers." But no sooner had he crossed the narrow Arne than the whole aspect of human life changed: "poverty no more; not a beggar, hardly a discontented face, to be seen; numerous and well-dressed people swarming on the ramparts; drums beating; soldiers, well dressed and armed, exercising; and folks, with business in their looks, hurrying to and fro."¹

Calvin ruled the republic of Geneva, of a hundred and nine square miles and twenty thousand inhabitants, very much as the Puritan clergymen ruled Boston; and both communities enjoyed, in consequence, a safe, continuous abundance, which industrious people can always enjoy who repress their expensive tastes, or wisely indulge them in common. Most of his legislation tended to economize vital force. The objection to his system was that it so completely deprived its subjects of reasonable liberty that a reaction from it was inevitable; and the reaction from Calvinism is among the most deplorable known to civilized beings, because Calvinism contains so much good and truth essential to human welfare.

Pastor Gaberel, whose little book upon Voltaire's residence among his people is familiar to travelers, describes the old Calvinistic government as Spartan rigor enforcing Christian morals. Calvin, he observes, *forced* every person to be a Christian of the strictest sect. His sumptuary laws necessitated a system of surveillance far more corrupting than the vices it detected. Furniture, food, clothing, diversions, scale of living, expenditure, were regulated by law. The whole people were compelled, under penalty of fine, to rise in the winter at six, and in the summer at four.

"Our ancestors," says M. Gaberel, "seem to have been much less sensitive to cold than their descendants, since a single fire served for each house, whatever the season, and that in the kitchen; scarcely a pan of coals being ever seen in the family room of the wealthiest houses. There was little furniture except of common wood. Windows closely fitting were regarded as real luxuries, and people cared little for the large apertures which gave admission to the chill mountain wind. A severe frugality was maintained at table, — a frugality which

¹ Gray to his father, October, 1739.

survived the shipwreck of the customs of the Reformation; for the law required that the people should not have upon their tables, on ordinary days, more than two dishes, — one of meat, one of vegetables, without pastry. The simplicity of manners went still farther. Family worship and ceaseless conversation upon religious subjects drew masters and servants nearer together; they sat at the same table, and, generally, there was no other dining-room than the kitchen."

In conjunction with this austere simplicity, there was a mental life which was widely diffused. The traveler Davily said: "Among this singular people, Latin and Greek are taught to persons who elsewhere know not *a* and *b*." Calvin, too, had formed a Harvard out of the material left after the destruction of the ancient church; and his scheme contemplated the education of every child. Art did not flourish in his city. He proscribed musical instruments. There was one art which he and all his sombre host held in the deepest abhorrence, and that was the one in which the new-comer chiefly delighted, and of which he was the most gifted representative then alive, — the dramatic. No theatre had ever existed in Geneva and, since Calvin had preached there a play had scarcely ever been performed.

Two centuries had now passed since the death of the reformer, during which Calvinism had been softening under the influence of knowledge and prosperity. That large intellectual ingredient which he left in his system cannot but destroy it, when peace and plenty have set free men's minds from the paralysis of terror. The new ideas, the new literature, the new science, Pope, Newton, Voltaire, had found entrance into Geneva, as into the American colonies, and divided the educated class into two portions: those who adhered to the old austerities, and those who attempted the freer and more elegant life of "the world." Calvinists, moreover, are invariably a thriving people; so much is there in their system which is adapted to the inexorable limitations of man's lot and means. Not to waste must ever be a fundamental condition of welfare; and of all wastes there are none so extravagantly wasteful as the vices. The French refugees brought with them skillful hands. Many of the finer industries had long been rooted in the republic. The watches, clocks, and jewelry of Geneva

were already celebrated on both continents. The prosperous manufacturers visited Paris once or twice in their lives, and travelers of rank and fortune were coming in ever-increasing numbers to the land of lakes and mountains, which has since become, and must forever remain, the favorite playground of Christendom. Under these influences Geneva was in 1755 what Boston would have been if the mother country's protective system had not confined her people to the coarser products, and compelled them to seek fortune on, in, and beyond the sea.

Boston was English, and Geneva was French. Underneath the Calvinistic crust, hard and tough though it be, there is still the human being. You may see a gleam of distant recognition in the eye of an old French Calvinist when a line of Molière or a jest of Voltaire is repeated. Three centuries of Calvinism cannot quite extinguish his better self, and when Voltaire powdered the little republic with the shaking of his wig, Geneva had had only two centuries of Calvin.

The party of travelers were expected at Geneva. For several weeks Voltaire had been contemplating a settlement near Lake Lemman, and had corresponded with citizens of Geneva with a view to the acquisition of "an agreeable tomb" in the neighborhood. He happened to arrive after the gates were closed for the night, but at the mention of his name they were opened, and the party found shelter at an inn. It was the evening of a national holiday; all was gayety and movement in the city. After four days' stay they took up their abode at the great château of Prangin, ten miles away, situated on high ground near the lake, and commanding the view of lake and mountain which so many poets and travelers have described. The owner lent this house of "thirteen front windows" to Voltaire, while he was looking about him for an abode more suited to his needs. The winter of the Alps lay white and magnificent before them as they looked out; the summit of Mont Blanc being about fifty miles distant. Within the château — of which they could only inhabit a corner — they all shivered with the cold, even the robust Collini, the youngest member of the family. He had been reared under Italian skies, and he had been, during all these late troublous months, looking forward to a residence in Paris, which should compensate him for his afflictions. He

found it dismal enough to shiver through the Christmas holidays and the January snows in a vast, cold, empty house ten miles from a town.

“This Lake Lemán [he wrote to a Colmar comrade] is terrible. The winds reign there, and beat upon the château of Praugin in such a fashion that the philosopher, who is shut up and screened in every way, is all aghast. The Parisian lady, little accustomed to the lake and the winds, is continually in mortal terror at the noise of the blasts from the north. As to myself, I have nothing to fear except the noise and fury of *Apollo*. All this amuses me a little. I hear some one crying out on one side, ‘Make a good fire!’ on the other, ‘Shut close all my windows!’ One asks for a furred cloak; the other muffles up his head with five or six caps; and, as for me, I come, I go, I write, I die of cold and rage. But I am going to give you a piece of news: we are soon to leave this château. Notwithstanding the rigor of the season, our philosopher has made a journey to Geneva, where he was shown a very pretty country house in the outskirts of the city. He found it to his taste; he drove a bargain for it; they gave in to him; and the contract is to be immediately signed. Behold us, then, Genevans! I am very much put out about it. This is not the Paris which they have been promising me, and which I have always hoped for.”

They remained two months at the château, notwithstanding its inconveniences. The master had the solace of occupation, more or less congenial, and he therefore could endure the sublime solitude, “far from the human race;” but the impatience of his companions gave him much distress. “*They*,” said he, “have need of courage.” There were days when he, too, was depressed, particularly while he was waiting for his papers and books, and when the Alpine winds chilled the very soul within him. There was no merry Christmas in the château, if we may judge from a letter which he wrote that day to D’Argental, in which he spoke again of “that abortion of a Universal History,” which had done him so much harm. “I have only to bear patiently the wrongs I experience. I have no pardon to ask of any one, having nothing to reproach myself with. During forty years I have labored to render service to literature; in return, I have received nothing but persecutions. I ought to have expected them, and I ought to know how to suffer them. I am sufficiently consoled by the constancy of your courageous friendship. At this season I

can do nothing but keep quiet." But he added that when milder weather came, if one spark of genius remained to him, he would employ it in finishing his play, and, above all, in rendering his *Universal History* worthy of the public which had received the mutilated edition with so much favor.

The longest winter passes. He was cheered, too, by hearing from D'Argental that this new exile of an author and poet who made France illustrious in the eyes of Europe was resented by the public, who received his old plays with renewed enthusiasm. His little comedy of "Nanine," not very popular when produced in 1749, was played this winter with striking success. He said it was because the public began to regard him as a dead man, and he advised the actors to go on reviving his other half-successes, and thus turned his exile to account. At the same time came news that a tragedy by "old Crébillon," whom the court had galvanized into the semblance of a rival to himself, had failed. "I have read the 'Triumvirate,'" he wrote to his Duchess of Saxe-Gotha, "and can make nothing of it. This warns me that old men ought to cease exhibiting themselves to the public."

If the public regarded Voltaire as a dead man, he was giving extraordinary signs of life. He was doing at last what he might well have done twenty years before: he was founding a country home of his own. He had been thinking of this all the last year, and had told one of his Swiss friends that, if there should happen to be a good place on Lake Lemman that could be bought for a sum not exceeding two hundred and twenty-five thousand francs, he should like to be notified of the fact. But a question arose. "You know I have not the honor to be of the religion of Zwinglius and Calvin; we are papists, my niece and I."

Could he possess, could she inherit, in a country still governed by the spirit of those reformers? They could; the legislative body of Geneva granted formal permission; the laws of adjoining cantons were found favorable; it remained only to choose the spot.

CHAPTER XVII.

SETTLING AT LES DÉLICIES.

TWO hundred paces from the gate of Geneva on the Lyons road, near the junction of the two rivers, the Arne and the Rhone, there was a hill, the summit of which was a plateau large enough for a villa and liberal grounds, and high enough to overlook the city, the two rivers, the lake, and give entrancing views of the Jura and the Alps. A commodious house, with beautiful gardens, stood upon this site, the terraced grounds of which descended to the very waters of the Rhone. It had been occupied recently by the son of the Duchess of Saxe-Gotha; it was then empty, and a life lease of the property was for sale. After some weeks of bargaining, Voltaire bought the lease for eighty-seven thousand francs, and only waited for the opening of spring to begin his favorite work of planting, transplanting, and embellishing. The place had been called St. John's. The new purchaser, rejoicing in his acquisition, as well he might, gave it the name of Delights (Les Délices) which it retains to the present time (1881). Other houses now conceal the views which he enjoyed; the road near which it stood is a street, called "Rue des Délices;" and the mansion, which is now not unlike one of the larger villas of our Newport, has been occupied of late years as a young ladies' boarding-school; but, in 1755, the place was sufficiently secluded, open, and rural.

"The lake border," said Voltaire, "is one neighborhood," and it was curiously adapted to be the abode of a man whom governments regarded with an unfriendly eye, and who might be obliged suddenly to change his jurisdiction. On his plateau he was in the republic of Geneva. He had only to walk ten minutes and cross a short bridge to get to the kingdom of Sardinia. Thirty minutes' easy riding would put him in France; in an hour he could be in the Swiss canton of Vaud. Nor did

he cease acquiring property in the region, until, at one time, he possessed five houses under four governments. This very winter he bought the lease of a spacious château near Lausanne, called Montrion, in a more sheltered situation, intending it as a winter residence. Later, he acquired a handsome house in Lausanne itself; then one in France; another in Vaud: and all of them within a circuit of a day's ride.

“All these residences [said he] are necessary to me. I am charmed to pass easily from one frontier to another. If I were only a Genevan, I should depend too much upon Geneva; if I were nothing but a Frenchman, I should depend too much upon France. I have fashioned for myself a destiny belonging to me alone, possessing as I do this droll little kingdom in a Swiss valley. I am like the Old Man of the Mountain: with my four estates, I am upon my four paws. Montrion is my little cabin, my winter palace, sheltered from the cruel north wind; then I am arranging a house at Lausanne, which would be called a palace in Italy. Judge of it: fifteen windows command the lake, to the right, to the left, and in front; a hundred gardens are below my garden; the blue mirror of the lake bathes them. I see all Savoy beyond this little sea, and beyond Savoy the Alps, which rise into an amphitheatre, and upon which the rays of the sun form a thousand accidental effects of light. There is not a more beautiful view in the world; Seraglio Point at Constantinople has not a finer one.”

He suddenly changed his part in the drama of the time: from guest to host; from a man of bonds and annuities to a landed proprietor; from vassal to lord. During the whole of his Prussian episode, including the year and a half of subsequent wandering, his fortune had gone on ever increasing. In Prussia he had spent only a small fraction of his allowance from the king; at Colmar he could not have expended a tenth of his income; and, if Madame Denis at Paris relieved him of a few thousand francs per annum, he was still a man of business, still a speculator, still an owner of shares in ships trading between Spain and America. One such vessel, of which he was part owner, was named the Pascal; and by a coincidence upon which he delighted to jest, this vessel was one of the fleet chartered by the King of Spain in 1756 in his war against the “Jesuit-Kings of Paraguay.” “The King of Spain,” wrote Voltaire to the Countess of Lutzelbourg, “is sending four vessels of war against the reverend fathers. This is so true that

I, who speak to you, myself contribute my part of one of these four vessels. I was, I know not how, interested in a ship of considerable size which was about to sail for Buenos Ayres; we furnished it to the government to transport troops; and, to complete the joke of this adventure, this ship is named the Pascal." A king who hired a vessel from Voltaire in such an emergency we may be sure paid a good price for it.

He could well afford to live like a fendal lord, if any man ever could or can, and he did so from 1755 to the end of his life. Collini mentions that he kept "six horses, four carriages, a coachman, a postilion, two lackeys, a valet, a French cook, a cook's boy, and a secretary." He had, also, like Maupertuis, a pet monkey, who threw stones at the passers-by, and once bit the hand of his master so severely that he could not write for several days. Later, he bought a bear; and when he was told that a priest had written a book to justify the massacres of St. Bartholomew he wrote in reply, "Send me that abominable book, and I will put it in my bear's cage." Human guests could not be wanting. In the pleasant seasons of the year he had sometimes to excuse delays by explaining that "half the day was given unavoidably to the *processions* of curious people who came from Lyons, Geneva, Savoy, Switzerland, and even from Paris. Almost every day, seven or eight persons dine with me, and sometimes twenty." He availed himself of his character of invalid to avoid returning visits, and this privilege of kings was willingly conceded to him. At length, too, he had a room, in his winter house at Lausanne, which was really as warm as he wished; "so warm that, in January, he was troubled with flies, while looking out upon forty leagues of snow."

To crown his felicity, there was at Geneva the printing and publishing house of the Brothers Cramer, to whom he assigned the publication of his Universal History, which appeared in seven volumes in 1756. Gabriel Cramer, it seems, was a man of fine presence. "You a printer!" said the author, at their first interview. "I should have taken you for a chief of staff!" He was happy in his printers, to whose importance and prosperity he appears to have contributed. Dr. Tronchin, one of the most famous and successful physicians in Europe, was a native of Geneva, where the name is to this day famil-

iar ; and, though he was about to settle in Paris, Voltaire often had opportunity to consult him.

Situated thus in the most beautiful region of the earth, he shone before Europe as a victor over circumstances, cardinals, and kings. Collini, looking back forty-five years, remembered with a glow this sudden transformation of Freytag's prisoner, Dom Calmet's monk, the Colmar exile, and the snubbed visitor of Cardinal de Tencin's antechamber, into a grand seigneur, living in opulence at summer villas and winter châteaux, town houses and country houses, spreading joy and plenty about him ; a patron of the arts, a centre of hospitality, a personage that drew the eyes of mankind to the region he inhabited. He was himself fully alive to the change in the aspect of his affairs, and celebrated it by a vigorous and striking Epistle in verse, even before he had taken possession of his villa. This fine poem, which belongs to the literature of the lake, is one of the best of the hundred and twenty-two poems which he called Epistles, — a term which well describes the blending of the familiar and the grand which marks this specimen. He speaks of the lofty mountains, which "press the hells and cleave the skies," as the throne and refuge of Liberty. He extols the comparative equality of conditions which he observed at Geneva, where "small account is made of the count's coronet and the double-pointed mitre ; where insolent Rank, wearing the ribbon woven by Vanity's brilliant hand, does not repulse with pride the humble and trembling prayer of sad Poverty ; where necessary labors are not despised ; where conditions are equal and men are brothers."

"On n'y meprise point les travaux nécessaires ;
Les états sont égaux, et les hommes sont frères."

This has, alas, never been true of any community, but Geneva was one of the few communities that tried to make it true, with some approach to success. We can imagine that this poem of a hundred and twenty lines, thick-sown with allusions of thrilling power to the local reader, must have enhanced the warmth of his welcome, and quieted in some degree the natural apprehensions of the Calvinist pastors. We can easily believe Pastor Gaberel when he tells us that, whenever the carriage and four of Voltaire was seen approaching the bank in Geneva, where it oftenest stopped, a crowd would quickly

gather to see him alight. On one occasion he did not relish this tumultuous compliment. "What do you want, boobies that you are?" he cried, from the upper step of the bank. "Do you wish to see a skeleton? Very well; behold one!" Then, throwing aside his cloak, he exhibited his meagre form to the throng, who applauded him as he made his way with difficulty to the carriage door.

One note of warning he received as he was concluding his purchase of Les Délices. It was from Jacob Vernet, the most active and distinguished of the Genevan pastors, who is still remembered by the long list of his theological works. He wrote thus to the new-comer:—

"MONSIEUR,— The only thing which troubles the general satisfaction at seeing a man so celebrated as you are arrive among us is the idea which the works of your youth have given the public of your sentiments concerning religion. I will not conceal from you that the wise men who govern us, and the good commoners as well, have manifested in conversation serious apprehensions on this subject. I hope that you will dissipate them completely. If, among us, theologians, lawyers, and philosophers are in accord upon religion, it is because the pastors confine themselves to the preaching of the pure gospel, and governments know that the gospel is necessary. Therefore, monsieur, we hope you will enter into our views, and that, when occasion arises, you will join us in turning our youth from irreligion, which leads to libertinage. Be sure that in that case you will be honored, cherished among us, and feared by no one."

To this note he replied, as it appears, on the same day, February 5, 1755:—

"MY DEAR SIR,— What you write concerning religion is very reasonable. I detest intolerance and fanaticism; I respect your religious laws; I love and I respect your republic. I am too old, too sick, and a little too severe toward young people. You will give me pleasure by communicating to your friends the sentiments which attach me tenderly to you."

This letter, not too coherent, was not his only answer to the reverend pastor and to the old school party whom Jacob Vernet ably represented. The first visitor of note whom he entertained at his villa was his *protégé*, Lekain, then in his first

celebrity as the actor of chief tragic parts at the national theatre. His salary being only two thousand francs a year (eight dollars a week), he was glad enough of the chance to play in provincial towns, when his services were not required in Paris. Voltaire, with vehement iteration, invited him to his new abode, and, in April, to the great joy of the family, he came. "Zaïre" was rehearsed. Invitations were issued to the whole circle of the magistracy, and the tragedy was performed before them in one of the large rooms of the house. "Lekain," he wrote to D'Argental, "was, I believe, much astonished. He expected to find in me, as of old, the father of Orosmane and Zamora; he found only a mason, a carpenter, and a gardener. That, however, did not hinder us from making almost all the council of Geneva shed tears. Most of those gentlemen were at my Délices; and, by way of breaking up the circle, we began to play 'Zaïre.' I have never seen people more moved; never before were Calvinists so tender."

Himself, Lekain, and Madame Denis played the principal parts, and he expresses frankly the opinion, in more than one letter, that those parts were never better played at the Théâtre-Français. "No dramatic company in Europe," he once wrote, "has a better old fool in it than myself." They gave the Genevans, too, a taste of the new tragedy of the "Orphan of China," which produced, he says, "a great effect." It was a fortunate visit for Lekain. Voltaire called the attention of Richelieu to his merit and his poverty, which secured him a happy success at Lyons, and induced the First Gentleman to annex five hundred francs to his income. How, indeed, could a First Gentleman refuse such importunity as that with which the poet urged the claims of this great actor?

"He draws but two thousand francs a year from the theatre at Paris. One cannot have more merit, nor be poorer. I promise you a new tragedy if you deign to give him your influence during his stay at Lyons. We implore you, Madame Denis and myself, to procure for him that trifling advance of which he is in need. Have the goodnes to do him this service. You cannot imagine how greatly we shall be obliged to you. Do not refuse me, I beg of you. Let me flatter myself with having obtained this favor, which I ask with the utmost urgency. You need but utter one word to your colleague.

Forgive my saying so much about a thing so simple and so easy ; but I love to entreat you, to talk to you, to tell you how much I love you and to what a point you will always be my *hero*."

Lekain went away happy from Geneva, with a large portion of the new play in his portmanteau, which play was to be produced at Paris before many weeks had passed. The poet had a singular delight in the thought of having given "the children of Calvin" a taste of the forbidden pleasure of the drama. Those children enjoyed it ; but the reverend fathers disapproved. On the five "points" men may differ in opinion, but no one can rationally doubt that, to the *children* of Calvin, plays are more attractive than sermons. For the moment, however, no voice was raised in reprobation, and the magistrates, among whom there was one dramatic author, felicitated themselves on the chance which had given them so exquisite a delight. A French play of the old type, whether comedy or tragedy, had so few characters and required such simple accessories, that it could be played very well at one end of a drawing-room. It was but a poem in dialogues. If the actors held the book in their hands and read their parts tolerably well, a keen pleasure was enjoyed by appreciative guests. We gather from Voltaire's letters that, on this occasion, a space was cleared, Madame Denis and Lekain took their places, and began to declaim, while the company sat or stood in a semicircle before them. Misguided is the community where religion frowns upon an exercise so simple, so innocent, so becoming !

One of the children of Calvin, Jean Jacques Rousseau by name, a native of Geneva, but then living at Paris, was much interested in Voltaire's having chosen his native place as an asylum. He had but recently sprung into celebrity, though he was at this time forty-three years of age. In 1749, the Academy of Dijon gave as the subject of their prize essay this question: "Has the Restoration of the Sciences contributed to purify or to corrupt Manners?" Rousseau, who was then gaining a slender and precarious livelihood in Paris by copying music, saw this announcement in a newspaper as he was walking out to Vincennes, near Paris, to visit Diderot, who was then a prisoner in the fortress there. He tells us, in his "Confessions," that he was seized with a frenzy of inspiration to re-

veal to man the curse of knowledge; he was so deeply stirred, he says, as to be deprived of consciousness. "A violent palpitation oppressed me. Unable to walk, for difficulty of breathing, I sank under one of the trees of the avenue, and passed half an hour there in such a condition of excitement that when I arose I saw that the front of my waistcoat was all wet with my tears, though I was wholly unconscious of shedding them."

The Abbé Morellet, in his Memoirs, gives us a different version of the story (which Marmontel also relates), as from Diderot's own lips:—

"Arrived at Vincennes, he confided to Diderot his project of competing for the prize, and even began to develop the advantages which the arts and sciences had conferred upon human society. 'I interrupted him,' said Diderot, 'and I said to him seriously, That is not the plan to take; there is nothing new in that, nothing sensational [*piquant*]; that is a bridge for asses. Take the other side, and see what a vast field opens before you: all the abuses of society to emphasize; all the evils which desolate it, a consequence of the errors of the mind; the sciences, the arts, employed in commerce, in navigation, in war,—all so many sources of destruction and misery to the greatest number of men. Printing, mariner's compass, gunpowder, the utilization of mines, each a step in the progress of human knowledge, and each a source of calamities! Do you not perceive all the advantage which you will have in taking that view of your subject?'"¹

Thus Diderot is said to have spoken. Nature, miseducation, and disease had combined to give this unhappy Rousseau a wonderful power to express emotions he did not feel, and preach a morality he could not practice. Fourteen essays competed, and the prize was awarded to the eloquent perversion of Jean Jacques. Its publication gave him sudden and great celebrity. Soon after, he published a second Discourse, in the same strain and equally false, on the "Origin of Inequality;" in which he represented savage life as Arcadian purity and peace, and civilized life in odious and abominable contrast. Rousseau, whose mental life, as he has told us, began with his early reading of Voltaire's Letters upon England, sent a copy of the new essay to his fellow-citizen near the gate of Geneva. Voltaire ac-

¹ 1 Mémoires de l'Abbé Morellet, 115.

knnowledged the gift in a long letter, to which Rousseau replied at length.

These two letters are part of the literary history of that generation.

VOLTAIRE TO ROUSSEAU.

“I have received, monsieur, your new book against the human race; I thank you for it. You will please men, to whom you tell truths which concern them, but you will not correct them. One could not paint in stronger colors the horrors of human society, from which our ignorance and our weakness expect so many consolations. No one has ever employed so much intellect in the attempt to prove us beasts. A desire seizes us to walk on four paws when we read your work. Nevertheless, as it is more than sixty years since I lost the habit, I feel, unfortunately, that it is impossible for me to resume it, and I leave that natural mode of walking to those who are more worthy of it than you and I. Nor can I embark to go among the savages of Canada: first, because the maladies with which I am afflicted retain me near the greatest physician in Europe, and I should not find the same succors among the Missouri; secondly, because war has broken out in that country, and the example of our nations has rendered the savages almost as wicked as we are. I limit myself to be a peaceful savage in the solitude which I have chosen in your country, where you ought to be.

“I agree with you that literature and the sciences have sometimes been the cause of much evil. The enemies of Tasso rendered his life a tissue of misfortunes; those of Galileo made him groan in prison at the age of seventy years for having known the motion of the earth, and, what was more shameful, they compelled him to retract. No sooner had your friends begun the ‘*Dictionnaire Encyclopédique*’ than those who presumed to be their rivals called them deists, atheists, and even Jansenists.

“If I dared to reckon myself among those whose labors have been recompensed by persecution alone, I should show you men in a rage to destroy me, from the day that I gave the tragedy of ‘*Œdipe*’; I should show you a library of ridiculous calumnies printed against me; an ex-Jesuit priest, whom I saved from capital punishment, paying me by defamatory libels for the service which I had rendered him; I should show you a man, still more culpable, printing my own work upon the ‘*Age of Louis XIV.*,’ with notes, in which the most brutal ignorance poured forth the most infamous impostures; . . . I should show you society infected with this kind of men, unknown to all antiquity, who, not being able to embrace an honest calling, whether

that of workman or of lackey, and knowing, unfortunately, how to read and write, become courtiers of literature, live upon our works, steal manuscripts, disfigure them, and sell them ; . . . I should paint you ingratitude, imposture, and rapine pursuing me for forty years, even to the foot of the Alps, even to the brink of my tomb. But what shall I conclude from all those tribulations? That I ought not to complain ; that Pope, Descartes, Bayle, Camoens, and a hundred others have experienced the same injustice, and greater ; that this destiny is that of almost all those whom the love of letters has too powerfully influenced.

“ Confess, monsieur, that these are trifling private misfortunes, which the community scarcely perceives. What does it matter to the human race that some hornets pillage the honey of some bees? Men of letters make a great noise about all these little quarrels ; the rest of the world does not know them, or laughs at them.

“ Of all the bitternesses spread over human life these are the least fatal. The thorns attached to literature and to the reputation which it gives are nothing but flowers compared with other evils which, in all times, have overwhelmed the earth. Admit that neither Cicero, nor Varro, nor Lucretius, nor Virgil, nor Horace, had the least share in the proscriptions. Marius was an ignorant man ; the barbarous Sylla, the debauched Antony, the imbecile Lepidus, read little of Plato and Socrates ; and as to that tyrant without courage, Octavius Cæsar, surnamed so unworthily Augustus, he was a detestable assassin only while he was deprived of the society of men of letters.

“ Confess that Petrarch and Boccaccio did not cause the intestine troubles of Italy ; confess that the badinage of Marot did not cause the massacres of St. Bartholomew, nor the tragedy of the Cid the troubles of the Fronde. Great crimes have seldom been committed except by celebrated ignoramuses. That which makes, and will always make, of this world a vale of tears is the insatiable cupidity and the indomitable pride of men, from Thomas Kouli-kan, who did not know how to read, to a clerk of the tax office, who knows only how to cipher. Literature nourishes the soul, rectifies it, consoles it ; it was of service to you, monsieur, at the time when you wrote against it. You are like Achilles, who inveighed against glory, and like Father Malebranche, whose brilliant imagination wrote against imagination.

“ If any one ought to complain of literature, it is myself, since at all times and in all places it has served to persecute me ; but we must love it, despite the abuse which is made of it, as we must love society, the agreeableness of which is corrupted by so many wicked men ; as we must love our country, whatever injustice we suffer in it ; as we must love and serve the Supreme Being, notwithstanding the superstitions and the fanaticism which so often dishonor his worship.

“M. Chappuis informs me that your health is very bad; you should come to reëstablish it in your native air, to enjoy liberty, to drink with me the milk of our cows, and browse our herbs. I am very philosophically, and with the most tender esteem,” etc.

To this letter Rousseau replied, September 10, 1755, and in doing so gave a very good specimen of what we call his “early manner.”

J. J. ROUSSEAU TO VOLTAIRE.

“It is for me to thank you, monsieur, in all regards. In offering you the draught of my sad reveries, I did not think to make you a present worthy of you, but to acquit myself of a duty, and to render you an act of homage which we all owe you as our chief. Sensible, also, of the honor which you do my country, I share the gratitude of my fellow-citizens; and I hope that it will be only augmented when they shall have profited by the instructions you can give them. Adorn the asylum which you have chosen; enlighten a people worthy of your lessons; and you, who know so well how to paint virtue and liberty, teach us to cherish them within our walls, as we do in your writings. All that approaches you ought to learn from you the path to glory.

“You see that I do not aspire to make men return to the condition of beasts, although I regret much, for my part, the little I have lost of that condition. With regard to you, monsieur, such a return would be a miracle, at once so great and so injurious that it would belong to God alone to perform it and to the devil alone to desire it. Do not try, then, to fall upon four paws; no one in the world would less succeed in the attempt than you. You set us up too well upon our two feet for you to cease to stand upon yours.

“I admit all the infamies which pursue men celebrated in literature; I even admit all the evils attached to humanity, which seem independent of our vain knowledge. Men have opened upon themselves so many sources of misery that when chance diverts some one of them they are scarcely less inundated. There are, besides, in the progress of things, some concealed chains of cause and effect which people in general do not perceive, but which will not escape the eye of the sage who is willing to reflect upon them. It was neither Terence, nor Cicero, nor Seneca, nor Virgil, nor Tacitus, it was neither the men of learning nor the poets, who produced the misfortunes of Rome and the crimes of the Romans; but without the poison, slow and secret, which corrupted, little by little, the most vigorous government of which history makes mention, neither Cicero, nor Lucretius, nor Salustius would have existed; or, if they had existed, they would not have written. The amiable age of Lelius and Terence was the remote

origin of the brilliant ages of Augustus and Horace, and, at last, of the horrible ages of Seneca and Nero, of Domitian and Martial. The taste for literature and the arts springs in a people from an inward vice which that taste augments. And if it is true that all kinds of human progress are pernicious in their own way, those of the mind and knowledge, which increase our pride and multiply our errors, directly promote our unhappiness. But there comes a time when the unhappiness of man is such that the very causes which have created it are necessary to prevent its increase: the sword must be left in the wound, lest the wounded man expire in drawing it out.

“As to myself, if I had followed my first vocation, and if I had neither read nor written, I should doubtless have been happier. Nevertheless, if letters were now annihilated, I should be deprived of the only pleasure which remains to me. It is in the bosom of literature that I find consolation for all my ills; it is among those who cultivate it that I taste the sweets of friendship, and learn to enjoy life without fearing death. I owe to it the little that I am; I owe to it even the honor of being known to you. But let us consult our interests in our business, and truth in our writings. Although philosophers, historians, scholars, are necessary to enlighten the world and lead its blind inhabitants, if the sage ‘Memnon’¹ has told me the truth, I know nothing so silly as a people of sages.

. . . . “If we explore the original source of the disorders of society, we shall find that all the evils from which men suffer come to them through error much more than through ignorance, and that what we do not know at all injures us much less than what we think we know. Now, what surer means of running from error to error than the rage to know everything? If men had not supposed they knew that the earth did not revolve, they would not have punished Galileo for having said it revolved. If philosophers alone had claimed the title of philosopher, the Encyclopedia would have had no persecutor. If a hundred myrmidons did not aspire to glory, you would enjoy yours in peace; or, at least, you would have only rivals worthy of you.

“Do not then be surprised to feel some thorns inseparable from the flowers which crown great talents. The assaults of your enemies are the satirical acclamations which follow triumphal processions. It is the eagerness of the public for all your writings which produces the thefts of which you complain; but it is not easy to interpolate them, for neither iron nor lead will blend with gold. Permit me to say to you, from the interest which I take in your repose and in our instruction, Despise the vain clamors by which it is less sought to do you

¹ See Memnon, or Human Wisdom, a tale by Voltaire. 59 Œuvres, 29.

harm than to prevent your doing good. The more you are criticised the more reason you should give us to admire you. A good book is a terrible response to printed attacks; and who will dare to attribute to you works you did not write, as long as you write only inimitable ones?

“I am grateful for your invitation, and if this winter leaves me in a condition to go in the spring to dwell in my native land, I shall avail myself of your goodness; but I should like better to drink the water of your fountain than the milk of your cows; and, as to the herbs of your garden, I believe I should find in it only the lotus, which is not the food of beasts, and the moly,¹ which prevents men from becoming beasts.”

Other correspondence between them followed, in an equally friendly spirit, neither of them foreseeing the antagonisms of the future. It is an evidence of Rousseau's power that when he had written only these two perverse, melodious essays he should so naturally take the tone of an equal in addressing the chief of literature, to whom, indeed, he offered homage, but only as a prince to a king. While these letters were passing, Rousseau witnessed the new triumph of Voltaire at the Théâtre-Français with pleasure and approval; for he spoke indignantly of the café critics who presumed to pronounce upon the faults of the “Orphelin de la Chine,” though they were incapable even of feeling its excellences.

August 20, 1755, this drama, long deferred, written amid the distractions of the last two years, was produced at the national theatre, with Lekain and Mademoiselle Clairon in the principal parts. The theatre was crowded, and expectation was at the highest stretch. Both the friends and the foes of the author were present in force; but recent events had given the friendly faction an advantage. The author was absent and in exile. The opening of the play, too, was calculated to arrest and impress the mind. It presented an inclosure in the palace of Peking, where the ladies of the court, some learned mandarins, the infant prince and his attendants, were gathered in horror and consternation, while the victorious Tartars, under the terrible Gengis-Kan, were sacking and killing without. A dynasty was falling; an empire was changing rulers; a storm of infernal war was roaring round this one spot, not yet en-

¹ A plant given by Mercury to Ulysses to prevent his yielding to the enchantment of Circe.

tered by the ruthless horde. China was seeing the triumph of force over civilization. "In vain," cries a noble mandarin, "were we the legislators and the example of nations; in vain was the world instructed by our laws. Wisdom is naught; force has destroyed all." The emperor's child, the "Orphan of China," sole relic of the dynasty, this mandarin has sworn to save; and, to this end, surrenders his own infant son to the Tartars, pretending it is the son of the slain emperor. But the mother revolts, and prevents the sacrifice. "You have thought like a hero; I have acted like a mother." She appeals to Gengis, who, at the end of five acts of agony, relents, forgives, restores. The play abounds in these telling situations and effective points, which practiced dramatists learn how to create. The scene in which Gengis first appears is full of dignity and power. "I sent terror; I bring peace." Carnage and destruction cease at his command. This kind of contrast, this exhibition of barbaric dignity and grandeur, has since been part of the common stock of stage effects. The author gave the actors an extraordinary number of lines and couplets of the kind which, as we say, "bring down the house," because they express a nobleness we all love, and would so gladly *live*, if we could. "We owe the king our time, our services, our being, — all, even the blood of a son born for his service; but our honor is a possession we do not owe him."

The success of this powerful drama could not have long been doubtful. Collini, who was present on the opening night, mentions the struggle of the factions, "one wishing to make the play succeed, the other wishing to make it fail." "The work," he adds, "was crowned with the most brilliant success. Mademoiselle Clairon, as well as the piece, triumphed over the cabal. She played the part of Idamé with so much expression as to share with Voltaire the triumph of that day." He might have mentioned, too, as part of the history of the stage, that, on this occasion, for the first time, the great actress and her female companion paid to art the last homage of playing without their *paniers*. He hastened to communicate the good news to Voltaire and Madame Denis. "The bookseller Lambert," says Collini, "came and begged me to get for him permission to publish the new piece. I wrote to Les Délices, and the author not only consented, but abandoned to me the

compensation which he had the right to demand." The play ran until it was suspended by the removal of the court to Fontainebleau. The actors followed the court, and played it in the palace, with every circumstance of *éclat*.

The queen, we are told, was afraid of the play, and said to the king, the evening before the performance, that there were, as she had been assured, some questionable passages in it. An hour after a gentleman came to her and asked if she desired the piece to be suppressed. She replied that she had not read it, and all she wished was to have passages cut out which savored of irreligion or disloyalty. But the police had scrutinized the play too closely, and Voltaire knew his ground too well to leave a line in it for timid bigotry to carp at. Over one passage the censor had held his pen in doubt for a while: "Nature and marriage were the first laws; they came from the gods; the rest is of men." But the censor had finally allowed the lines to remain. Another passage was cut out at the representation, but restored in the printed version. Gengis, while ordering the pillage and destruction to cease in Peking, mentions particularly the sacred edifices and books. "If," he concludes, "this mass of writings was dictated by error, that error is useful to me; it occupies these people, and renders them more docile." It was a wise censor who scented danger in this. The queen being informed that the play was free from objection, it was given at Fontainebleau, as announced.

It is an evil time when the guardianship of virtue devolves upon well-meaning dullness, which makes it ridiculous! This poor queen, on her return from mass one day, snatched from a book-stand near the palace a little volume containing Voltaire's poem on "La Religion Naturelle." She tore it in halves, and said to the woman in attendance that, if she sold such books, her license should be taken away. The woman was astounded. She had supposed from the title that it was a work of edification.¹

¹ Voltaire aux Délices, par Desnoiresterres, page 117.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE LISBON EARTHQUAKE.

THE Lisbon earthquake of November 1, 1755, appears to have put both theologians and philosophers on the defensive; for it was not easy to "reconcile" such a catastrophe with any theory of the universe which had yet found general or respectable acceptance in Christendom. La Mettrie, if he had lived so long, would have found it in perfect harmony with his system; but materialists were then few in number and of little note. The earthquake occurred, as it chanced, on All Saints' Day, one of the great festivals of the Roman Catholic year, and at an hour (9.40 A. M.) when the numerous churches of the city were filled to overflowing with worshipers. Lisbon, though no longer the opulent city of Portugal's great period, may have then contained a population of a hundred and seventy thousand; one half of whom, probably, were on their knees, in church, seeking to propitiate a paternal deity, at the very moment when the subterranean thunder of the approaching convulsion made every heart stand still.

At twenty minutes to ten that morning, Lisbon was firm and magnificent on one of the most picturesque and commanding sites in the world, — a city of superb approach, placed precisely where every circumstance had concurred to say to the founders, *Build here!* In six minutes the city was in ruins. Thirty churches had fallen. Fifteen thousand people were dead; fifteen thousand more were dying in anguish. These were the fortunate. The miserable survivors were face to face with everything that mortals dread most, — bereavement, ruin, desolation, anarchy, fire, and rapine. All the region round about was shaken fearfully, and repeated shocks kept the universal terror alive. Half the world felt the convulsion. For several weeks shocks, more or less severe, were experienced in places distant from the peninsula, — in Africa, in America, in

remote islands, and even in the midst of the ocean. Eighteen days after, at about four in the morning, came the turn of New England, when, in Boston alone, fifteen hundred chimneys were injured, and almost every house had its memento of the perturbation, if only in the family clock, stopped at eleven minutes past four. What city next would be overthrown? For many weeks, as we see in the letters and memoirs of that time, people in distant parts of Europe went to bed in alarm; relieved in the morning to find that they had escaped the fate of Lisbon one night more.

News was then about a month in traveling from Lisbon to Geneva. Voltaire was profoundly moved by this dread intelligence, which came to him first as a rumor too terrible to be true, then greatly exaggerated. After the first shock of horror and compassion, he was struck with the utter futility of all previous attempts of man to interpret a system of things in which such sudden and irremediable woe could come upon a people no more guilty than others. He remembered that he, too, had essayed to philosophize upon the universe. In earlier years he had taken pleasure in assisting to translate into French Pope's "Essay on Man," the argument of which had not seemed so unreasonable to him: —

" All nature is but art, unknown to thee ;
 All chance, direction, which thou canst not see ;
 All discord, harmony, not understood ; -
 All partial evil, universal good."

In the presence of such a catastrophe he felt the nothingness of this statement, and of every statement by which man has sought to explain the illimitable whole of which his globe is but a warmed and peopled atom. "If Pope had been at Lisbon," he wrote, "would he have dared to say, '*All is well*'? Matthew Garo did not say it even when only an acorn fell upon his nose."¹ In many of his letters of those weeks there is some similar reference to the catastrophe. "It is a terrible argument against optimism," he said again and again. "The *All is well* of Matthew Garo and Pope is a little deranged. I dare no longer complain of my colics since that occurrence. It is not permitted to an individual to think of

¹ Allusion to La Fontaine's Fable of the Acorn and the Gourd. (Fables, Book IX., Fable 4.)

himself amid a desolation so general. . . . It was the Last Judgment for that region; nothing was wanting to it except the trumpet."

And again, "Would you believe that people imagined at Geneva that there was an earthquake in France, as in Portugal, because the post-rider failed to arrive to-day? God preserve us from it! The Alps are a good counterpoise to the shocks; in all senses, they are the asylum of repose. The Protestants saved at Lisbon, and the Inquisition swallowed up, were not the effects of St. Dominic's prayers."

The counterpoise of the Alps did not prove sufficient; for an Alpine village was engulfed by an earthquake on the 9th of December, and, a few weeks later, a shock was felt at Les Délices. "I have had the honor," wrote the master of the house, "to have an earthquake in my hermitage." It did no more harm, however, than to shake a bottle of Muscat from the table while the family were at dinner. In the midst of these alarms came false news to increase the general consternation. A report circulated in Europe, in February, 1756, that Philadelphia had been captured and sacked; for the Seven Years' War, imminent in Europe, was already raging in America, where, indeed, it was a ten years' war.

Voltaire's poem upon the Disaster at Lisbon, written while the perturbations continued, is the most powerful and pathetic human utterance of that generation. A competent critic of our own day well styles it "one of the most sincere, energetic, and passionate pieces to be found in the whole literature of the eighteenth century."¹ True, it does but state the problem, not solve it; but who has solved it? It was much to state it without compromise; it was more to own it insoluble.

What crime, the poet asked, had those infants committed who lie crushed and gory upon the maternal breast? Was Lisbon wickeder than Paris? Yet Lisbon is destroyed, while Paris dances. *All is well, all is necessary*, do you say? If an eruption like this was necessary, could it not, I humbly ask, have burst forth in the midst of an uninhabited desert? "I revere my God, but I love mankind. When man dares to groan at so terrible a scourge, he is not presuming; he is only compassionate. Oh, mockery, to say to the afflicted sons of

¹ Rousseau, by John Morley, volume i., page 315.

men that the mortal anguish of individuals brings delight to others, and works good to the whole! What solace is it to the dying man to know that from his decaying body a thousand worms will come into life? All seems well to the vulture feasting upon the bloody members of his prey, until an eagle with rending beak tears the vulture in turn; then a man strikes the proud eagle with murderous lead; and, afterward, the man himself, pierced with wounds, lies on the battlefield, bloody, upon a heap of the dying, and serves to nourish the devouring birds. And you cry, *All is well!* The universe gives you the lie. Your own heart refutes the error. What sad, what perplexing, truths! A God, you say, came to console our afflicted race; *he visited the earth, and changed it not!* A sophist says he could not; another tells us he did not choose to do so, but will at some future time; and even while they argue Lisbon is engulfed, and the ruins of thirty cities strew the blood-stained shore. Either man is guilty, and God punishes his race, or else this absolute Master, without anger, pitiless, serene, indifferent, follows the eternal torrent of his first decrees. Either unformed matter, rebellious to its Master, carries in itself faults as *necessary* as itself, or else this mortal life is but a narrow passage to an eternal world. *One day, all will be well*, — this is our hope. *All is well to-day*, — this is illusion. “A caliph once, at his last hour, addressed to the God he adored as his only prayer, ‘I bring thee, O thou only king, thou only infinite, all that which in thine immensity thou hast not,— faults, regrets, evils, and ignorance.’ But he might have added to these, HOPE.”

These are but a few of the thoughts of the poem, which extends to two hundred and fifty lines. It serves as a record to mark precisely how far man in 1756 had advanced toward the discovery of his own ignorance. That discovery was not yet complete; nor does the poem contain any indication of the path by which some imperfect comprehension of the universe may, in the course of centuries, be reached. Here is the knot which baffled the poet: —

“ Dieu tient en main la chaîne, et n'est point enchaîné;
 Par son choix bienfaisant tout est déterminé:
 Il est libre, il est juste, il n'est point implacable.
 Pourquoi donc souffrons-nous sous un Maître équitable ?¹

¹ God holds in his hand the chain, and is not himself enchained. By his be-

The child Goethe, six years of age, was distressed by the same dilemma. The stupendous event, he tells us in his Autobiography, arrested the attention of the world for a long time, and set all minds upon reflection. Never before had the demon of terror diffused over the earth so wide-spread an alarm. "The boy," he adds, "who was compelled to put up with frequent repetitions of the whole matter, was not a little staggered. God, the creator and sustainer of heaven and earth, whom the leading articles of the creed declared so wise and benignant, having given both the just and the unjust a prey to the same destruction, did not seem to manifest himself, by any means, in a fatherly character. In vain the young mind strove to resist these impressions, which became all the more impossible, since the wise and Scripture-learned could not themselves agree as to the light in which such phenomena should be regarded."

Rousseau was attracted and repelled by Voltaire's poem. He clung to his optimism, because, as he remarked, he found "comfort" in it. The unhappy man saw in the catastrophe of Lisbon new proof of the essential evil of civilization. Savages, he truly observed, would not have built houses seven stories high, nor huddled a population of nearly two hundred thousand upon those seven contiguous hills. In the long epistle written to parry the points of Voltaire's poem, Rousseau does not advance anything of more value than this: God is perfect; therefore, all that occurs is the best possible; this world, then, really is, *because it must be*, the best of possible worlds. Hence, Pope is right, Voltaire wrong. It was an eloquent, plausible letter, which did not admit of serious reply; but it had prodigious effect at the time, because it came to the rescue of an imperiled doctrine, which the polite world had generally accepted and had found "comfortable." It was comforting to a marquis or a bishop, wasting forty thousand francs per annum in a province where ten thousand peasants had insufficient nourishment, to be assured, in serious and weighty words, by a man of great renown, that this was the best arrangement possible. It enabled Monseigneur to bear with equanimity the otherwise uncomfortable spectacle of hag-

nificent choice all is determined. He is free, he is just, he is not implacable. Why then do we suffer under an equitable Master?

gard laborers and pining childhood. Rousseau invited our poet to reply to this letter, and draw up a moral code which mankind could rest upon and adhere to in all circumstances.

Voltaire's reply was the burlesque story of "Candide." It was not a case for argument; Rousseau's best of possible worlds did not require refutation, but exhibition. In his poem upon the Lisbon earthquake, the author could only hope to reach the few hundreds in each country who inhabit and possess the universe; but almost any reader could catch the point of this diverting tale,—fit antidote to Rousseau's serious and deadly fallacies. I can perhaps give the reader in a few words an imperfect idea of this most celebrated of Voltaire's prose burlesques.

There lived in the castle of Baron von Thunder-ten-tronckh a young man of such engaging manners and innocent mind that he was called Candide. The baron was one of the most powerful lords of Westphalia, for his castle had a door and windows; he was styled My Lord, and his dependents laughed when he told his stories. He had a son and a daughter, whose tutor, Pangloss, was the oracle of the house. Dr. Pangloss proved admirably that there is no effect without a cause, and that, in this best of possible worlds, the castle of the baron was the most beautiful of castles, and the baroness the best of possible baronesses. It is demonstrated, he would say, that things cannot be other than they are; for, as everything was made for one end, everything is necessarily for the best end. Remark well that the nose is formed to wear spectacles: so we *have* spectacles. The legs were obviously instituted to be breeched, and we have breeches. Pigs were made to be eaten; we eat pork all the year. Hence, those who have asserted that all is well uttered folly; we must maintain that all is best.

The guileless Candide, deep in love with the baron's daughter, the fair and fat Cunégonde, believed implicitly in the philosophy of Dr. Pangloss. The testy baron surprised the lovers, one day, exchanging an innocent caress behind a screen in the dining-room. He kicked Candide out of his house; the baroness boxed her daughter's ears; and all was consternation in the best of possible castles. Wandering, penniless, Candide is trapped into the Bulgarian army; he sees and shares the horrors of an infernal campaign, which the author

relates in the absurd phrases of Dr. Pangloss. He escaped to Holland, and sauntered, half starved, into an edifice where a man spoke eloquently for an hour upon charity. He asked this eloquent man for aid. "Are you for the good cause?" inquired the orator. "There is no effect without a cause," replied Candide; "all is enchained necessarily, and arranged for the best." "Do you believe the Pope to be antichrist?" asked the orator. "I don't understand you," answered the young man; "but, whether he is or not, I want something to eat." "Get out! Scoundrel! wretch! Don't come near me, if you value your life!" The orator's wife, too, putting her head out of the window, and seeing a man who did not feel sure the Pope was antichrist, poured upon his bare pate a pailful of dirty water.

Candide witnessed, in the course of his wanderings over the earth, the dreadful catastrophe at Lisbon, where his opinions upon the necessary chain of events in the best of possible worlds consigned him to the tender mercies of the Inquisition. The wise men of Portugal had discovered that the true way of preventing earthquakes was to burn a few heretics by a slow fire. This was done with imposing ceremonial; but Candide was so happy as only to be flogged nearly to death, to the cadence of sacred music. In a Mahometan army he saw every kind of cruelty and horror; but, amid rapine, massacre, and crime unspeakable, never did the perpetrators fail to pause five times a day, and say the prayers enjoined by Mahomet. Candide finds himself at Paris, and while there he visits the theatre, and observes the manner in which a new play is received by the friends and foes of the author. At length, after adventures and mishaps of every kind, in all parts of this best of possible worlds, Candide and his Cunégonde, with Pangloss and other friends, are reunited in Turkey, upon a modest farm, and discover the secret of living happily. That secret was for each individual to labor in his vocation with fidelity and skill, without perplexing himself with a theory of the universe.

"What I *know*," said Candide, "is that we must cultivate our garden."

"Let us work without reasoning," said one of his companions; "it is the only way of rendering life supportable."

All the company assenting, each of them set himself to exercise his talents. The little farm yielded abundantly. Cunégonde was no longer either young or fair, but she became an excellent pastry cook. Every one had his task, and all labored with zeal and success. Dr. Pangloss occasionally harped upon the old string. "Really," he would say to Candide, "all events *are* linked together in this best of possible worlds. If you had not been kicked out of a beautiful castle, if you had not been put into the Inquisition, etc., you would not be here eating citrons, sweetmeats, and pistache nuts." To which the wise Candide would reply, —

"That is well said; but it is *necessary* to cultivate our garden."

This story of two hundred pages was not immediately published, but appeared at the end of 1758, when it had universal currency. As usual, the author affected extreme astonishment that any one should attribute so light a production to *him*. "I have at length read 'Candide,'" he wrote to a friendly pastor of Geneva. "People must have lost their senses to attribute to me that pack of nonsense. I have, thank God, better occupation. If I could ever excuse the Inquisition, I would pardon the Portuguese inquisitors' hanging the argumentative Pangloss for having sustained optimism. In truth, this optimism obviously destroys the foundations of our holy religion. . . . For my part, I will forgive optimism, provided those who support that system add to it a belief that God in another life will, in his mercy, give us the happiness of which he justly deprives us in this. It is the eternity to come which makes optimism, and not the present moment."

The Lisbon earthquake was the awful prelude to a long period of most bloody and desolating war in Europe and America, in which the important nations of Christendom were involved. Voltaire might well say that nothing in his "Candide" was so extravagant as the real events of the period. In America there was a cause of strife, for it was a thing of necessity to decide which should be dominant in North America, English, French, or Indian; as, in 1756, man was still such that a question of that nature could only be settled by fighting until it was ascertained which was the strongest.

But in Europe what cause of war was there? On that war-

cursed continent, the immediate cause was personal government. A rash young minor poet, Frederic II. of Prussia, enemy to womankind, had given mortal offense to the four most powerful women then alive: First, to Maria Theresa, Empress of Austria, by wresting from her what she felt to be *her* province of Silesia, — fertile, populous, one of the bright “jewels of her crown.” Next, he offended Elizabeth, Empress of Russia, by writing (among other nonsense) canto v. of his burlesque poem, “Le Palladion.” Also, he had deeply wounded Madame de Pompadour, the maker of French ministries, by calling her, in derision and contempt, Petticoat III., and by saying, in reply to her compliment conveyed by Voltaire, “*I don't know her!*” Finally, this young king had made an enemy of Madame Denis, by not openly disavowing Freytag, and making public amends for the horrors of Frankfort.

Madame Denis was not “in politics;” she was only in Les Délices, nursing her uncle's ever-cooling wrath, to keep it warm; she was where she could convey to Pompadour the “*I don't know her!*” and other anecdotes. Les Délices, as we shall see anon, was influential at the Russian court, where there was a Princess Catherine, one day to be Catherine II., who owed her intellectual life to Voltaire, and held him in extreme favor. “My dear Elizabeth,” wrote Voltaire, just after the death of that empress in 1762, “detested Luke [nickname for Frederic II.]; and I had not a little contributed to that; and I laughed in my sleeve, for I am a droll fellow.” We shall see him erelong in familiar correspondence with the Russian court, and writing the history of Peter the Great, at the empress' invitation. Frederic would have done well and justly to soothe Madame Denis by a few decent words.

The other three offended ladies, who *were* in politics, and had armies under them, were uniting to crush the impolite and impolitic young poet. In August, 1756, he, having discovered their secret purpose, fell upon Saxony with sixty thousand men; after which he declared war. Every family, as Goethe remembered, took sides in this tremendous conflict, or else divided into parties. The family of Les Délices were in perfect accord. Frederic had amused himself, while waiting the slow development of the crisis, by turning Voltaire's tragedy of

“*Mérope*” into an opera, of which he sent a copy to the poet. This attention might have softened him a little toward a once-loved pupil, if he had had no irate niece at his side to bristle up into new fury every time the name of Frederic was mentioned. That name was seldom pronounced in the house. When Voltaire’s monkey, Luke, bit the hand accustomed to caress it, the creature was thought to have behaved like the King of Prussia; and, from that time, the king was called Luke in the familiar conversation and correspondence of the household.

Pompadour was nearer Geneva than either empress, and Voltaire, through Richelieu, could reach her at all times. “It does not belong to me,” he wrote to the duke in October, 1756, “to thrust my nose into all these grand affairs; but I can certify to you that the Man complained of has never been attached to France, and you can assure Madame de Pompadour, in particular, that she has no reason to value herself upon his regard. I know, too, that the empress [of Austria] spoke of madame a month ago with much eulogium.”

To the public, in his poem, “To the King of Prussia on his Invasion of Saxony:” —

“Tu vécus trop d’un jour, monarque infortuné!
Tu perds en un instant ta fortune et ta gloire.”¹

Again, to D’Argental, in November, after Frederic’s first successes: “That devil of a Solomon wins and will win. If he is always fortunate and covered with glory, I shall be justified in my former taste for him; if he is beaten, I shall be avenged.”

¹ Thou hast lived too long by one day, unfortunate monarch! Thou hast lost in an instant thy fortune and thy glory.

CHAPTER XIX.

AMONG THE CHILDREN OF CALVIN.

"IT is only France that can suit your uncle," wrote Lord Keith to Madame Denis, in 1753, and so it proved. From the windows of Les Délices he could see France, the nearest French soil being scarcely a league distant; the Rhone flowed at his feet; and the language of his native land was spoken all about him. But he was not in France. He was a "papist" dwelling among the children of Calvin; he was a conscious unbeliever living among conscious believers; and he lived among them as an acid lives with an alkali, in a common fluid. For five or six years he was an inhabitant of Switzerland; he dwelt close to its borders during the remainder of his life; and there was effervescence as often as anything occurred to stir the neighborhood.

At Geneva, as in Boston during the same period, there was a certain number of educated men of the world, who were able to be virtuous without relinquishing their mental rights; and, at first, associating chiefly with these, he felt himself safe in his new abode. But such persons were few in both cities. After the Lisbon earthquake, the government in both appointed a day of fasting and prayer, and the churches were crowded "all day," as we read, with terrified people. There had been a hopeful project of building a theatre at Lausanne, which Madame Denis and himself had warmly encouraged. The earthquake suspended the scheme. If a few polite families in each canton read with approval his poem upon the catastrophe, thousands thronged to the churches to hear the sermons of the Calvinist pastors.

He soon gave those honest pastors some real cause of apprehension. By an absurd coincidence that "Pucelle" of his, which had been long oozing into publicity, was printed during the earthquake period. The first edition, besides being both

imperfect and incorrect, contained a great number of passages of the grossest description by other hands, in which friends of Voltaire (Richelieu, among others) were indecently assailed, — passages which it was impossible Voltaire could have written. He was justified in disavowing the work thus curtailed and disfigured, and, the reader may be sure, he did so with all the force and reiteration of genuine alarm. To parry the effect of the false edition, he caused a number of copies to be made of the poem as he wished posterity to have it, and these copies he sent to members of the government, to courtiers, to Richelieu, to Pompadour; saying to each of them, in substance, "See, how innocent is the true 'Pucelle'! It is but the harmless badinage of a young man; a modest attempt of a French poet to imitate the immortal work of the divine Ariosto."

"La Pucelle" was evidently a favorite work with him. In composing it he gratified keenly all his loves and all his hates: above all, his love of verse and his love of fun. "I have wrought this poem with care," he wrote to D'Argental, in July, 1755; "I have regarded it as a pendant to Ariosto; I have thought of posterity, and I am doing the impossible to escape the dangers of the present time." He continued long to labor upon it, even after the publication of the first authorized edition at Geneva in 1762. "Whenever my master was sad or sick," says Wagnière, his last secretary, "he would say to me, 'Go and get a volume of Ariosto, or else my Jeanne.'" It was so that he named his 'Pucelle,' and that was the name which the binder had put upon the back of the volume."

It is to be noted, also, that the very quality of this poem which makes it to us a forbidden book was the one for which he valued it most. He doted upon the simplicity, the *naïveté*, as he called it, of the ancient authors. Writing once to Madame du Deffand, and advising her to cheer the eternal dark to which her blindness condemned her with amusing books, he added this passage: "You cannot read Ariosto in his own language, and I pity you much for it; but, take my advice, have the historical portion of the Old Testament read to you from one end to the other, and you will discover that there is absolutely no book more amusing. I do not speak of the edification which can be derived from it; I speak of the singular-

ity of the ancient manners, of the crowd of events, the least of which savors of prodigy, of the *naïveté* of the style, etc. Do not forget the first chapter of Ezekiel, which no one reads; but, above all, have the sixteenth chapter translated, which our translators dared not give literally, and you will see that Jerusalem is a beautiful girl, whom the Lord loved as soon as she had hair and breasts. . . . Indeed, this *naïveté*, which I love above all things, is incomparable. There is not a page which does not furnish thought for an entire day. Madame du Châtelet had well commented upon it from one end to the other. If you are so fortunate as to get a relish for this book, you will never know *ennui* more, and you will see that nothing could be sent you which approaches it.”¹

The sons of Calvin were familiar with Ezekiel, but they did find in the work of the prophet a justification of “La Pucelle.” One Grasset came from Paris with an incorrect manuscript of the poem, which he offered to sell to the author for fifty louis. “I told him,” reports Voltaire, “that neither I nor any one of my house would ever transcribe things so infamous, and that if one of my lackeys should copy a single line of it I would discharge him on the spot.” He denounced the possessor of the manuscript, who was promptly arrested and imprisoned, and all the copies of the work that could be found in the city were burnt by the hangman in the usual place. No harm except fright seems ever to have come to the author from this poem. After dreading its publication for twenty years, it was now freely circulated; editions were multiplied; artists illustrated it; the reading world devoured it, laughed over it, read it again and again. The Pope, too, placed it under the ban; the parliament of Paris burnt it; the police of Geneva hunted it down; and, in short, it had all the successes. A printer in Paris, in 1757, was sentenced to the galleys for nine years for printing an edition; but the author, chiefly through his own adroit management, escaped molestation.

Four works of his, in 1756, occupied the reading world of Christendom, namely, the poem on Natural Religion, the poem on the Catastrophe at Lisbon, “La Pucelle,” and the authorized edition, in seven volumes, of his Universal His-

¹ To Madame du Deffand, September 17, 1759.

tory. Add to these the tragedy of the "Orphan of China," still in the newest gloss of its celebrity, reproduced in London and Berlin, printed and widely circulated. It were difficult to overstate the splendor of his reputation at this time: and it is necessary to bear it always in mind, in order to understand his position and his immunity. It was creditable, at least, to the courage and consistency of the Genevan pastors to oppose his proceedings and pursue his works as they did, and thus incur the wrath of an opulent seigneur who was investing a million francs in their neighborhood, and of an author who had at the end of his pen an atom more poignant than the death which the poisoned arrow carries. Maupertuis had not yet recovered from the "Diatribes of Doctor Akakia;" and some cantos of "La Pucelle" were like the stitched and beaded thongs upon which a chief hangs the scalps of his enemies. They were all there, — Desfontaines, La Beaumelle, Fréron, Boyer, and the rest, arranged and displayed in the highest style of the scalper's art, for Europe to laugh at for centuries.

The sons of Calvin, not appalled by these dreadful examples, soon placed themselves in open opposition to his private theatricals, basing their procedure on the law of the republic, which forbade the performance of plays, both in public and in private. That first infringement in the spring of 1755, when Lekain, Voltaire, and Madame Denis had presumed to declaim scenes from "Zaïre" in the drawing-room of Les Délices, they passed over in silence. But when, in July of the same year, he began to beat up recruits for his dramatic company among the young people of Geneva, when he set about furbishing and completing his theatrical wardrobe, when he had scenery painted, when he inverted wine-barrels for the foundation of a stage, when he was taking off the rims of two cart-wheels to provide rolling thunder, and when he was getting ready a dust-pan upon which to flash lightning, then the pastors rose upon him. The Consistory met July 31st, and the following is a translation of its proceedings: —

"Monsieur the pastor of Roches reported that the Sieur de Voltaire was preparing to play tragedies at his house, St. John's, and that some of the actors who were to perform were inhabitants of this city. It was said, also, that he was having

a stage erected and decorations prepared. Upon which, it was decided to address monsieur the First Syndic, and to say to him that the Consistory rests in perfect confidence that the Magnificent Council will never countenance a disregard of its decrees of March 18, 1732, and December 5, 1739, which forbid all representations of plays, as well public as private. It was further agreed that, with regard to those of this city who were disposed to play parts in tragedies at the house of the Sieur de Voltaire, messieurs the pastors of their neighborhoods are to notify them, on the part of the Consistory, to abstain from so doing."¹

This being clearly legal, Voltaire submitted with edifying docility. He requested his friend, Dr. Tronchin, professor of theology, to assure the venerable Consistory that he was its very humble servant (*valet*), and he hoped they would bear it in mind. "A man," he wrote to another member of the family, Magnificent Tronchin, of the Council, "who owes to your honorable body the privilege of breathing this air ought to displease no one who breathes it. I am perfectly willing that your ministers shall go to the comic opera; but I am not willing to represent in my house, before ten persons, a piece full of morality and virtue, if that displeases them." A few days after, Professor Tronchin having visited him at Les Délices, he testified again the most complete submission to the laws of the Council. He added that he was extremely annoyed to have given occasion of complaint by the performance of a play at his house; but it was really more the fault of his visitors than his own, for they ought to have told him it was against the law. Now, however, that he was well informed on the subject, he should take the greatest care to avoid offending, his intention having always been to observe with respect the sage laws of the government.

The convenience of having a winter house under another government was now manifest. As soon as he was established in his winter quarters near Lausanne, finding the laws of that canton offered no obstacle, he stirred up the liberalized people of the city to go the length of building a theatre! That project, like so many others, was postponed by the convulsion

¹ Recueil d'Extraits des Registres du Consistoire de Genève, par M. Cramer, page 421.

that laid Lisbon in ruins. Terror pervaded all minds. The theatre could no longer be thought of, and the project was suspended. At Lausanne, however, the pastors could not prevent the performance of plays in his own house, and this became one of the most frequent recreations of the severe Alpine winter. His letters contain numerous allusions to his home theatre:—

“We gave *Fanime* yesterday, and with a new success. I played *Mohadar*; we were all dressed like the masters of the universe. I notify you that I played the part of the good father better than *Sarrazin*. This is not vanity; it is truth. I had wrath and tears, and a voice, now strong, now trembling; attitudes, too, and a cap! No, never was there seen such a lovely cap!”

[And, again, a few weeks after.] “We have played a new piece upon our pretty little stage. *Madame Denis* was applauded like *Mademoiselle Clairon*, and she would have been as much applauded at Paris. I inform you without vanity that I am the best old fool in any troupe. Believe me, you would have been much surprised if you had seen upon the border of our lake a new tragedy, very well played, very well felt, very well judged, followed by dances executed to a marvel, and by an opera bouffe still better performed; the whole done by beautiful women, by young men well formed who have talent, and before an assembly of taste. The actors have been formed in a single year. They are fruits which the Alps and Mount Jura never before yielded. Caesar did not foresee, when he came to ravage this little corner of the earth, that there would one day be in it more genius than at Rome. . . . I go from the theatre to my plants, to my vines, to my tulips; and from them I return to the theatre; and from the theatre to history.”¹

One of the witnesses of the representations at Lausanne was Gibbon, not yet the historian of the Decline and Fall, but only a young English student, perplexed in the extreme with rival theologies. He has left a too brief account of the dramatic performances of the amateurs:—

“The highest gratification which I derived from Voltaire’s residence at Lausanne was the uncommon circumstance of hearing a great poet declaim his own productions on the stage. He had formed a company of gentlemen and ladies, some of whom were not destitute of talents. A decent theatre was framed at *Monrepos*, a country house at the end of a suburb;

¹ To D’Argental, February and March, 1758.

dresses and scenes were provided at the expense of the actors ; and the author directed the rehearsals with the zeal and attention of paternal love. His declamation was fashioned to the pomp and cadence of the old stage ; and he expressed the enthusiasm of poetry, rather than the feelings of nature. My ardor, which soon became conspicuous, seldom failed of procuring me a ticket. The habits of pleasure fortified my taste for the French theatre, and that taste has perhaps abated my idolatry for the gigantic genius of Shakespeare, which is inculcated from our infancy as the first duty of an Englishman. The wit and philosophy of Voltaire, his table and theatre, refined, in a visible degree, the manners of Lausanne ; and, however addicted to study, I enjoyed my share of the amusements of society. After the representations at Monrepos, I sometimes supped with the actors.”¹

The drama was indeed the ruling passion of the household ; for Madame Denis, not discouraged by the rejection of her “Coquette,” was still courting in secret both the tragic and the comic muse. Her love of the drama led, in the spring of 1756, to her uncle’s losing his secretary, Collini, the companion of his disastrous retreat from Potsdam in 1753. He had become an important member of the family, and shared in all the duties incidental to the new position of his chief. He had even been dispatched to Paris, during the Pucelle panic of 1755, to prevent the publication of the poem ; when he had enjoyed a six weeks’ holiday at the capital. But, in the spring of 1756, he committed an indiscretion that cost him his place.

“Madame Denis [he explains] loved literature, and even produced literary works, and for some time I was the confidant and copyist of her dramatic writings. She was composing then her tragedy of ‘Alceste.’ The occupation she gave me obliged me to have private interviews with her ; I employed zeal and devotion in those little labors, which she nobly recompensed by gifts still preserved by me among the proofs of her esteem. The tragedy of ‘Alceste’ was not the only cause which obliged us to have private conversations together. The needs of a great house newly established, the oversight of which was confided to Madame Denis and to me, the necessity of concealing from her uncle the literary events which could disquiet him, and other reasons acci-

¹ Milman’s Life of Gibbon, page 108.

dental and not less innocent, required secret conferences. It was this which had rendered our relations more intimate, and established between us the tone and language of friendship. Perhaps our intimacy had given rise to some suspicions in Voltaire's mind. There were suppers at which we were alone, — himself, his niece, and I, — when, in a manner perhaps too marked, she addressed herself to me, and the conversation appeared to cause him some discontent. One evening, among others, I had reason to be sure of this, by those half words which have no meaning for strangers, but which are well understood by those to whom they are addressed. From that time Madame Denis used some precautions in our ordinary intercourse, of which she had never before thought.

. . . . “A new imprudence at length caused my disgrace, and severed me from the illustrious man to whom I had resolved to remain attached to the end of his life or mine. I was one day occupied in my room in writing a letter to a young lady of the little city of Rolle, when some one came to inform me from Voltaire that his niece, Madame de Fontaine, was about to arrive at Les Délices from Paris, and that I was desired to go and meet her with a carriage. I rose; I left my room without shutting the door, and I departed, leaving upon my table my unfinished letter. That letter contained nothing but badinage and pleasantry; Madame Denis was named in it. During my absence one of her women came into my room, cast her eyes upon my letter, read it, and carried it to her mistress.

“On my return I was received with a coldness all the more cruel from my knowing nothing of the cause. As much surprised as afflicted, I withdrew to my room. My letter was gone! I turned pale, and perceived what had come of my folly.

“The affair became serious, although I had some hope that time would appease the resentment of Madame Denis, and that the friendship of her uncle would prevail over a fault so light. The next day they pouted all day without speaking to me of the letter. The second day Voltaire summoned me to his room. ‘You have been wanting in respect to Madame Denis,’ said he, showing me the fatal letter. I replied that I knew it, but dared hope she would not take amiss the badinage to which I had given way in a moment of gayety, and which my heart disavowed. Voltaire replied that it would be impossible for him to retain me in his service, because his niece, who was very much offended, demanded the satisfaction of my departure.

“I watched for an opportunity to see Madame Denis and set myself right with her. I protested my respect, my esteem, and my attachment. She replied vaguely, and without giving me any hope. I saw plainly that I had to make up my mind to a change, and I took

my part accordingly. Voltaire advised me to establish myself at Paris, and promised to write to his friends to interest them in my favor; he assured me that I should not remain there long without obtaining employment. No proposition could have been more agreeable to me in the circumstances.

“The evil was beyond remedy, though I deplored it. I wrote to my family to inform them of my departure, and some days after I took leave of Voltaire. We had a conversation of more than an hour together. He asked me if I was sufficiently provided with money. I answered that I had enough for my journey and to go on with for some time. Without replying, he went to his desk, took from it a rouleau of louis, and said to me, ‘Take that; you know not what may happen.’ I thanked him; he embraced me; and, with tears in my eyes, I left the house of *Les Délices*.”

Collini adds various comments on Voltaire's character, and testifies anew to the natural goodness of his disposition. Voltaire, he observes, acted upon Swift's maxim, that a man should have money in his head, never in his heart. He had the art both of increasing and of enjoying his fortune. “Stinginess,” he adds, “never had a place in his house; I have never known a man whose servants could rob him with more ease. I repeat it: he was a miser only of his time.”

Exit Collini. Voltaire continued his good offices toward this imprudent secretary to the end of his own days. He procured for him in 1759 a good place at the court of the Elector-Palatine, which Collini held, I believe, as long as he lived, and the duties of which, he informs us, were much to his taste. He married there, and reared children. His place at *Les Délices* was supplied by a lad under sixteen, named Wagnière, a native of Geneva, who remained copyist, secretary, and factotum for the rest of his life, marrying one of the servants of the house, and becoming the father of a family in it. His salary was two hundred francs per annum, his wife's one hundred, with board and lodging for themselves and their children. “I was only fourteen,” says Wagnière, “when I entered his service, at the end of 1754. He deigned to notice the extreme desire I had to labor for his pleasure and my own instruction. He appeared gratified by it, promoted my education, himself giving me some lessons in Latin, which I had previously begun to study.” Wagnière evidently felt that Collini, imprudent

though he was, had been harshly treated, and he says he took warning from his abrupt dismissal to avoid giving occasion for censure.

To complete the story of Voltaire's contest with the pastors of Geneva on the subject of his dramatic performances, I will anticipate the course of events. The pastors, as they hoped, had frustrated his project of giving innocent delight to the polite people of their city. But he was an extremely difficult man to frustrate. Before he had been three years in Geneva, a turn in public events opened the way for his safe residence upon the soil of France; and, soon after, he bought the estate of Ferney, which, though in France, was only three miles and a half from the city of Geneva. Then he built a theatre at Châtelaine, a few yards over the border, and again induced Lekain to visit him, and give the irresistible *éclat* of his fame and genius to the opening nights. Invitations were scattered wide. The worthy, misguided pastors could offer only a moral resistance, which proved signally ineffectual. An eye-witness has left on record a very amusing account of the poet's triumph over them.

“The society of pastors [he reports] ordered a general visitation in the parishes, in order to obtain pledges not to attend the theatre of M. de Voltaire. The promises to abstain were so numerous that it was believed the actors would play to an empty house. But what delusion! The theatre is finished; the day of opening is fixed. Assemblies had been held in the social circles; the ‘true patriots,’ friends of religion and country, voluntarily engage not to put foot within it. They doom the actors to isolation and want; they are rigid; they prepare to struggle against temptation. But, alas! the day arrives, and in the evening of that day every one goes. It was like a procession. All the interest which the drawing of the lottery could create was absorbed that week by the passion for the drama; it seemed as if the people were going to get the grand prize at Châtelaine, such was the fury with which they went thither. This great concourse was attracted by Lekain, the celebrated actor from Paris, who, having come to visit Voltaire, was urged to perform at the theatre, and did actually play there three times last week, in three of Voltaire's pieces, ‘Adélaïde du Guesclin,’ ‘Mahomet,’ and ‘Sémiramis.’ I should not know how to describe to you all the follies which were committed from the desire to see that man play, and the crowds of people who hastened thither even in the morning, notwithstanding the bad weather. As

much as a louis was paid for the hire of one carriage, and no more carriages were to be had. The most wretched vehicles from neighboring villages were brought in.

“I who write to you, I also shared the general folly, and could not resist the curiosity to see the celebrated actor. I waited for Saturday, when they were to play ‘*Sémiramis*,’ for I knew that he shone the most in the part of Nimias. I made up by hard work the time which I was to lose the next day; for I was at the theatre at half past eleven in the morning, and yet I found the pit filled. But I saw everything quite as well from the second tier of boxes, and I had the advantage besides of having the company of M. Mussard, formerly syndic, who also had made an exception to his patriotic principles against the drama, in favor of the actor in question.

“I saw some sublime things, which even surpassed the idea which report had given me of that perfect actor. How all the passions were depicted in his countenance! What magnificent recitation! What harmonious gestures! What brilliant pantomime! But the mere art of the actor was that which we least admired in him. It was those flashes of genius, that impetuous transport, that involuntary oblivion of self, which deprived the spectator of the time to consider, and the critic of the opportunity to analyze coolly. Such was the moment when he issued from the tomb of Ninus, thinking he had struck Assur, while he had really killed *Sémiramis*. It was the triumph of nature, and it caused a universal shudder.

“But not the least part of the exhibition was Voltaire himself, seated against a first wing, in view of all the audience, applauding like one possessed, now with his cane, now by exclamations, — ‘*It could not be better! Ah! mon Dieu! how well that was done!*’ — now in preaching emotion by example, and putting his handkerchief to his eyes. So little was he able to control his enthusiasm that, at the moment when Nimias was leaving the stage, after having defied Assur, regardless of destroying the illusion, he ran after Lekain, seized him by the hand, and embraced him near the back of the stage. A more comic incongruity could not be imagined; for Voltaire resembled one of those old men of comedy, — his stockings rolled upon his knees, and dressed in the costume of the good old times, unable to sustain himself upon his trembling limbs, except with the aid of his cane. All the marks of old age are imprinted upon his countenance: his cheeks are hollow and wrinkled, his nose prolonged, his eyes almost extinguished; but, as Fréron says, that frosted head incloses a volcano always in eruption, although along with flames it throws out smoke and ashes also.”¹

¹ Voltaire et les Genevois, par J. Gabrel, page 46.

The exultation of Voltaire at his triumph breaks forth in his letters. "The manners of the children of Calvin are much ameliorated," he wrote; "they burn Servetus no more. Apropos of Calvin, I am going to play them a turn which will not please them. I have procured an old arm-chair which served their reformer as seat or pulpit, and this I shall use in the interview between Cinna and Augustus [in the "Cinna" of Corneille]:—

'Prends un siège, Cinna, prends.'¹

Act V., Scene 1.

What a fine noise there will be when the preachers find it out!" He prospered in this little scheme. A few days later he wrote, "Well, I have succeeded; I made the whole council cry; Lekain was sublime, and I am corrupting the youth of this pedant city." At length, but not until 1766, good sense prevailed over prejudice, and the council allowed a theatre to be opened in Geneva, the ill-success of which showed how needless was the opposition to it. The austerity of manners in Geneva softened to such a degree that when Albert Gallatin, a native of Geneva and a graduate of its University in 1779, first saw Boston, in 1783, he was amazed at the contrast between the two cities, and spoke of the Calvinistic provincialism that prevailed in Boston very much as Frenchmen had spoken of Geneva when his father first became a member of the Magnificent Council: "Life in Boston is very wearisome. There are no public amusements, and so much superstition prevails that singing, violin-playing, card-playing, and bowls are forbidden on Sunday."²

There was, however, another child of Calvin who appeared to be profoundly displeased at Voltaire's success in establishing the theatre in Switzerland. This was Jean-Jacques Rousseau, himself a dramatic author and a composer of music. Upon the question of the drama he placed himself in distinct opposition to the band of philosophers, and, as they thought, went over to the "enemy."

In 1757 Voltaire had the pleasure of a visit from D'Alembert, then in the midst of his work upon the Encyclopædia. His visit extended to five weeks, in the course of which he

¹ Take a seat, Cinna, take a seat.

² Life of Albert Gallatin, by Henry Adams, page 28.

met a large number of the more liberal members of the clergy and council, who paid great honor to an author so distinguished. On his return to Paris, D'Alembert, as if in recognition of the civilities he had received, wrote an article upon Geneva for the Encyclopædia, in which he gave the highest praise both to the people and the pastors; mentioning even their opposition to the theatre in the tone of most respectful dissent. The clergy, he said, were men of exemplary manners, who lived in great harmony with one another, as well as with magistrates and people. Several of them, he added, did not believe in the divinity of Jesus Christ, a doctrine of which Calvin, their chief, was so zealous a defender, and on account of which he caused Servetus to be burned. "Hell, also, one of the principal points of *our* creed, is not believed at all to-day by several ministers of Geneva; and, in one word, they have no other religion than perfect Socinianism, rejecting all that is called mystery, and imagining that the first principle of a true religion must be to propose nothing for belief which is offensive to reason." Then upon the theatre: —

"The drama is not permitted at Geneva: not that plays in themselves are disapproved, but they fear the taste for dress, dissipation, and libertinage, which troupes of actors bring with them. Nevertheless, would it not be possible to remedy this inconvenience by severe and well-executed laws regulating the conduct of the actors? By this means Geneva would have plays and preserve its manners. Theatrical representations would form the taste of the people, give them a fineness of tact, a delicacy of sentiment, which it is very difficult to acquire without that resource."

An article in an Encyclopædia has seldom brought about the ears of the author such a storm of protest and counter-statement as this one upon Geneva. Voltaire knew very well how it would be received, for the article had been more than suggested by himself. "I am *told*," he wrote to the author, "that there is an eulogium of Geneva in the new volume, in which it is said you praise the moderation of certain people. Alas! you know them not; the Genevese do not impart their secret to foreigners. The lambs whom you believe tolerant would be wolves if they were allowed to be." When the volume arrived, pastors and flocks appeared to be equally scan-

dalized, and solemn declarations were published of implicit belief in the doctrines which D'Alembert had congratulated the clergy upon having escaped. I need not dwell upon the details of this affair, because such things are all too familiar to ourselves, who live, as they lived, in an atmosphere of insincerity, omnipresent though varying in density in every neighborhood and every house, turning religion itself into a universal means of demoralization.

Rousseau, in a letter of two hundred pages, addressed to D'Alembert, defended the council and clergy of his country in their opposition to the theatre, and repeated, with his own impassioned, fallacious eloquence, the whole clerical argument against the drama. He drew a powerful contrast between his native Geneva, as he fancied he remembered it in his youth, an austere Arcadia, inhabited by a happy people of simplest manners, simplest tastes, and Paris, the abode of luxurious and wasteful frivolity. Paris was the chosen home of the drama; Geneva knew it not. How sad the change, if the honest people of Geneva should abandon their inexpensive social clubs and domestic circles, to waste at the theatre the money needed for their children's bread! It is impossible to conceive a piece of writing at once more eloquent and more misleading than this. He still treated Voltaire with personal respect, and mentioned certain plays of his and parts of plays, which, he said, were so excellent and so wise that, if plays in general were like them, it would be necessary for all the world to go to the theatre.

Voltaire, who had hoped that Rousseau would at last range himself on the liberal side, was almost as much puzzled by this outburst as he was disappointed. "What is this book of Jean-Jacques," he asked Thieriot, "against the drama? Has Jean-Jacques become a father of the church?" And later, "This lunatic, who might have been something under the guidance of his brethren of the Encyclopædia, takes it into his head to make a sect of his own. After writing a bad play, he writes against the stage. He finds four or five rotten staves of Diogenes' tub, and gets within them to bark at his friends."

But he still refrained from breaking with Rousseau, perceiving clearly that the reason of the man was not the avenue through which he reached his opinions. He made an oppor-

tunity, a year or two after, to publish a letter to an Italian nobleman, in which he gave an elaborate defense of the drama and met the points of Rousseau's epistle, without mentioning his name.

"The theatre, [said he] is the *chef-d'œuvre* of society. Men in general are compelled to labor at the mechanic arts, and their time is happily occupied; while men of rank and wealth have the misfortune to be abandoned to themselves, to the *ennui* inseparable from idleness, to gaming more fatal than *ennui*, to petty factions more dangerous than play and idleness.

"What is the true drama? It is the art of teaching virtue and good manners by action and dialogue. How cold in comparison is the eloquence of monologue! Have we retained a single phrase of thirty or forty thousand moral discourses? And do we not know by heart admirable sentences placed with art in interesting dialogues? *Homo sum; humani nihil a me alienum puto.*¹

"It is this which makes one of the great merits of Terence; it is that of our own good tragedies, of our good comedies. They have not excited a profitless admiration; they have often corrected men. I have seen a prince pardon an injury after a representation of the clemency of Augustus. A princess, who had despised her mother, went away to throw herself at her feet after witnessing the scene in which Rhodope asks her mother's forgiveness. A man well known sought reconciliation with his wife after seeing *Prejudice à la mode*. I saw the proudest man in the world become modest after the comedy of the 'Glorieux.' And I could cite more than six sons of distinguished families whom the comedy of the 'Prodigal Son' reformed. If our bankers are no longer coarse, if the people of the court are vain dandies no longer, if doctors have abjured the robe, the cap, and consultations in Latin, if some pedants have become men, to what are we indebted for it? To the theatre, — to the theatre alone.

"What pity ought we not, then, to have for those who wage war upon this first of the literary arts, who imagine that we ought to judge the theatre of to-day by the tressles of our ages of ignorance, and who confound Sophocles, Menander, Varius, and Terence with Tabarin² and Punch! But how much more to be pitied are they *who admit Punch and Tabarin, while rejecting Polyeucte, Athalie, Zaire, and Alzire!* Such are the inconsistencies into which the human mind falls every day!

¹ Terence, in the comedy of *Heautontimorumenos*, Act I., Scene 1. I am a man: I deem nothing human foreign to me.

² Farce writer and strolling player of the previous century.

“Let us pardon the deaf who speak against music, the blind who hate beauty; such persons are less enemies of society, less conspirators to destroy its consolation and its charm, than unfortunate beings to whom nature has denied some organs.

“I have had the pleasure of seeing at my country house ‘Alzire’ performed, — that tragedy wherein Christianity and the rights of man triumph equally. I have seen Mérope’s maternal love bringing tears without the aid of the love of gallantry. Such subjects move the rudest soul, as they do the most refined; and if the common people were in the habit of witnessing such spectacles of human worth there would be fewer souls gross and obdurate. It was such exhibitions that made the Athenians a superior nation. Their workmen did not spend upon indecent farces the money which should have nourished their families; but the magistrates, during their celebrated festivals, summoned the whole nation to representations which taught virtue and the love of country. The plays which are given among us are but a feeble imitation of that magnificence, but, after all, they do preserve some idea of it. They are the most beautiful education which we can give to youth, the noblest recreation after labor, the best instruction for all orders of citizens; they furnish almost the only mode of getting people together for the purpose of rendering them social beings.”

So passed the five or six years of his life on the soil governed by the children of Calvin. It was impossible that he and they should blend, except through their reversion to the Gallie type, and that could not be accomplished in the time left to him. He did much toward it; he prepared the way at Geneva, as elsewhere, for that happy time when religion shall be freed from the impertinences that repel the thoughtful without winning the thoughtless. Amusing incidents frequently occurred. He happened to say, in a familiar letter to Thieriot, of 1757, that “the Picard, Jean Chauvin, called Calvin, the veritable assassin of Servetus, had an atrocious soul;” and this letter found its way into a newspaper. Many sons of Calvin came to the defense of their spiritual progenitor. The affair called forth some sprightly verses, addressed to himself by Rival, a Genevan who was not a child of Calvin. Voltaire replied in a happy strain; both poems were speedily published, and Voltaire has preserved both in his “*Commentaire Historique*.” The witty Rival found all parties wrong: Servetus, for taking the trouble to be an anti-trinitarian in an imbecile age; the bilious Calvin, for employing the fagot

to refute him ; and Voltaire, for not fêting the saint of the country he inhabited. "You are rich, famous, free ; Tronchin watches over your health ; all who know anything admire you : you are wrong, famous Voltaire, to risk all that for the pleasure of pinching without laughter."

"No," he replied, "I am not wrong to dare to utter what worthy men think. For forty years I have braved the base empire of the despots of the mind. I am not wrong to detest those religious assassins ; and if that horrible frenzy has passed, if fanaticism is overthrown, hypocrisy remains ! Buffoons in shabby gowns, bad church-music, bad verses, stolen sermons, am I wrong if I despise you ?" All this and more, in lightest, melodious stanzas, readable by young and old, learned and simple.

Meanwhile, the Seven Years' War was raging on two continents. The name of Colonel Washington had been printed in European gazettes. Frederic of Prussia was defending himself with splendid constancy and tact against the four ladies so lightly offended by him, — ladies who had on their side six hundred thousand soldiers and a poet. It was those ladies who contrived to make it safe for Voltaire to live on the soil of France, provided he had other houses to run to within easy reach. We shall now see him on familiar terms with the beligerents, exchanging frequent letters with Frederic, and in relations, more or less intimate, with all the courts hostile to that monarch.

CHAPTER XX.

HE IS OFFERED A RED HAT.

MADAME DE POMPADOUR, in the spring of 1756, had been mistress of the King of France for twelve years. She lamented, so her *femme de chambre* records, her total lack of taste for that vocation, and tried hard to acquire it. It was therefore a relief to her when the king wandered in quest of beauty younger and less cold; and, such was her hold of him, that the less she shared his bed the more she had of his throne. Her biographers, Messieurs de Goncourt, give us the secret of her enduring power over the king in one happy phrase: "She killed all his time for him." The dull man had a dreadful commodity of twenty-four hours to do something with every day; she took them all off his hands, and slew them. She could not only provide in exquisite perfection all the usual pleasures, such as music, drama, ballet, tableaux, but she had all the coquetries, all the *enfantillages*, all the graceful audacities, all the little talents, which could amuse a man doomed to satiety from his childhood.

It is an argument against royalty that a nation has no right to select one family from the mass of its people, and surround it with conditions which reduce its members to imbecility; and if a nation commits this enormity there is a kind of justice in the members of that blighted family alleviating the splendid tedium of their lot by any diverting toy they can buy. This bored king had his alleviating Pompadour, and France paid for her with the loss of Canada, India, several rich islands, vast treasures, and many brave soldiers.

The woman had a difficult part to play; for the court was full of her enemies, and the nation hated her. The injured queen, the dull Dauphin, the zealous Boyer, all the severer ecclesiastics, and several of the ministers were utterly hostile to her. She would say to the Duke of Maurepas, on seeing him

enter with a bag of papers to read to the king, "Go away, Monsieur de Maurepas; you are making the king yellow. Adieu, Monsieur de Maurepas." And the minister, observing that the king was not displeased at this, would go away, and the public business was deferred. One of her devices was to impart "a gayety to the king's religion," giving a subdued festive character to his penitence; for this king never succeeded in getting away from the early teachings of his preceptor, Abbé de Fleury. He was an absolute coward; upon every occasion of alarm, he was liable to a lapse, which would banish the mistress, and give the ancient Bishop of Mirepoix despotic power over the intellect of France. Hence, during Lent, she would arrange a series of "sacred concerts" in her own apartment, at which she sang herself, and assigned parts to nobles and princes who could sing; thus making an entertainment which amused the king, while permitting him to think that he was assisting at a religious exercise, and setting a good example to his court.

The Lent of 1756, which followed the long-continued consternation of the Lisbon earthquake, was observed all over Christendom with unusual devotion and austerity. Madame fell in with "the mode," and performed the part of penitent very prettily and with much success, making a merit of shutting up the unfrequented passage between her room and the king's. She had just succeeded in forcing her appointment as lady of honor to the queen, and served her first turn of duty in February, 1756. Being thus enrolled among the respectable ladies of the kingdom, she conceived the idea of signaling her Lenten penitence by an achievement that would bring the entire pious faction to her feet in wondering gratitude. This was no less than inducing Voltaire, also, to join the hypocrites, or, as Condorcet states it, "to make Voltaire one of the actors in this comedy." The agent who proposed it to the poet was the Duke de La Vallière, grand-nephew of a mistress of Louis XIV.; he was one of Madame de Pompadour's familiar court, and an old acquaintance of Voltaire. The duke wrote to him thus, March 1, 1756:—

"I have received, my dear Voltaire, the *sermon* [poem on the Lisbon earthquake] which you sent me, and, despite the sound philosophy which reigns in it, it has inspired me with more respect for its author

than for its moral. Another effect which it has had upon me is to determine me to ask of you the greatest mark of friendship which you could possibly give me. You are nearly sixty years of age; I avow it. You have not the most robust health; I believe it. But you have the most beautiful genius and the best-balanced head; of that I am sure. And if you were to commence a new career under the guise of a young man of fifteen, though he should live longer than Fontenelle, you would furnish him with matter enough to render him the most illustrious man of his age. I do not fear, then, to ask you to send me some psalms embellished by your versification. You alone have been, and are, worthy to translate them. You will obliterate J. B. Rousseau; you will inspire edification; and you will put it in my power to give the greatest pleasure to madame. . . . It is no longer Mérope, nor Sully, nor Metastasio, that we want, but a little David. Imitate him; enrich him. I shall admire your work, and shall not be jealous of it, provided it be reserved to me, poor sinner that I am, to surpass it with my 'Betzabée.' I shall be content; and you will add to my satisfaction in granting me what I ask with the greatest impatience. Give me one hour a day; show the psalms to no one; and I will instantly have an edition of them published at the Louvre, which will yield as much honor to the author as pleasure to the public. I say to you again, I am sure she will be enchanted with it; and I shall be enchanted also that through you I give her a pleasure so great. I have long relied upon your friendship, as you know; and therefore I expect to receive immediately the first-fruits of a certain success which I am preparing for you. But I do not for this release you from your promise to send me the royal 'Mérope' [Frederic's opera], and the defense of my dear friend, 'Jeanne' [La Pucelle]. Adieu, my dear Voltaire; I expect news from you with the greatest impatience. You are sure of my sincere friendship; you can rely not less upon my genuine gratitude."

Voltaire's answer to this edifying epistle, which politely asked him to give the lie publicly to his whole career, has not been discovered. We gather from the duke's next letter on the same subject that Voltaire replied by asking questions; such as, What can have befallen madame? What is her object? Is she giving in to Boyer and the Dauphin? What is the matter? The duke replied, April 22, 1756:—

"I am going to answer, with the greatest pleasure in the world, my dear Voltaire, all the questions which you ask me. . . . Let us pass to the more interesting. A ray of grace has enlightened, but without intoxicating. Some moderate changes are the only evidence of it.

During the whole of Lent she does not go to the theatre, and fasts three times a week, but with the condition that she shall not be disordered by it. The moments she can spare for reading are probably employed in good books; for the rest, the same life, the same friends, and I flatter myself that I am one of the number. She is as amiable as she has always been, and has more credit than ever. This is precisely the position in which she is, and which makes her desire some psalms of your composing. She knows you, she admires you, and she wishes to read you again; but she takes pleasure in prescribing to you the subject of her readings. So, I repeat, it is necessary that you give us an hour a day, and you will immediately find that you have satisfied our desires and sustained your own reputation. I tell you once more, as simple truth, without stale flattery, that from all time you have been destined to do this work. You owe it to yourself, and to us also; and it will be a mark of attention to which the good prophet (David) will be very sensible. I also shall be very sincerely grateful for this proof of friendship on your part, and I expect at once the happy first essays.

“With regard to the Prussian opera [Mérope], the completion of ‘La Pucelle,’ which you promised me, and the other things you have made me hope for, direct them to Geneva to M. Vasserot de Châteauvieux, who will forward them by the first parcel he sends me. I ask for two copies of your poems (on the ‘Religion of Nature’ and the ‘Disaster of Lisbon’) with the notes: one for Madame de Pompadour, the other for myself. You will do well to inclose with them one or two psalms, and I thank you for them in advance.”¹

The answer to this letter is unknown also. We know, however, that the psalms were not sent with the “Pucelle,” and were never written. M. Condorcet, in his memoir of Voltaire, written as if by the authority of the poet, adds some statements still more extraordinary. The Duke de la Vallière, he says, proposed the translation of the Proverbs of Solomon, as well as of the Psalms; as a reward, the author was to return to Paris, “under the protection of the devout favorite” of the king. “Voltaire,” adds M. Condorcet, “could not become a hypocrite, *not even to be a cardinal*, — a lure held out to him almost exactly at the same time.” This offer of the hat was not credited by the intimate friends of Voltaire, when the story was first published; but, in 1826, the letters of La Vallière appeared in print, and it became less incredible.

¹ 2 Mémoires sur Voltaire, par Wagnière et Longchamp, page 535.

The reader may ask, Could Pompadour have fulfilled an engagement to make Voltaire a cardinal? It is difficult to set limits to the possibilities of a woman who could be, at one and the same time, mistress to Louis XV. and lady of honor to his queen, with the prestige and power of both positions. She was about to make the Abbé de Bernis cardinal and minister; and he was scarcely a more incongruous cardinal than Voltaire himself would have been. According to Marmontel, who lived much with him for years, this abbé, on issuing from his theological studies at Saint Sulpice, was a gallant, chubby-faced, rosy-checked young beau, who composed pretty verses for gay suppers, and lived the life of pleasure at Paris, without visible means of paying his share of the expense. As soon as he heard of the king's inclination for Madame d'Estiotes, off he posted to her country house, with his portfolio of verses under his arm. He amused her; she installed him in the Tuileries with a royal pension; he became the acknowledged lover of Princess de Rohan; and soon he was ambassador, cardinal, minister, ambassador again; and his wondrous luck outlasted the monarchy. If she could do this for a *Babet* [so Voltaire named Bernis, from his resemblance to a plump and rosy flower-girl of the theatre], she could have done as much for Voltaire — with his help.

This proposal of the Duke de La Vallière may have suggested to Voltaire two poems, which were composed soon after: one a paraphrase of the book of Ecclesiastes, the other a translation of the Song of Solomon; neither of which would have answered the purpose of Madame de Pompadour. It was said at the time that this translation of the Song of Solomon was "less indecent than the original." Neither is indecent. He took occasion in his preface to expatiate on that *naïveté* of the ancient poets, which he so much admired, and gave some "strong" passages from the Old Testament, which appear to have been indeed a "revelation" to many readers.

Fair and frugal France, despoiled by such people as these Pompadours, Louis, Bernis, and Boyers, was drifting to perdition; and now, in the early days of 1757, at the beginning of a long and desperate war with England and Prussia, a trifling event gave the kingdom entirely over to the direction of the mistress and her chubby-cheeked rhymer.

CHAPTER XXI.

IN THE SEVEN YEARS' WAR.

JANUARY 5, 1757, at a quarter past six P. M., the carriage of the King of France was at the door of the palace of Versailles, awaiting his descent from his apartment. It was surrounded, as usual, by a portion of the Hundred Swiss Guards. The king approached, followed by his attendants; he had placed one foot upon the step, when a stout young man pushed through the Swiss, and struck the king in his side with a small, long-bladed pocket knife, inflicting a slight wound, and terrifying him out of his senses. Being put to bed, he summoned his confessor, who remained with him a long time; he sent contrite messages to the queen; he ordered the Dauphin to preside for him at the council; and so panic-stricken was he that for ten days and nights he held no communication with the ingenious killer of his time.

Madame remained at home, desolate, torn with anxiety, stared at by impudent courtiers, who came in and out, "as if her boudoir were a church." From under her windows she heard execrations uttered by a mob less barbarous than the glittering crowd within. The Abbé de Bernis was much in tears; the son of Madame du Hausset went incessantly to and fro, spying, interviewing, reporting. Madame's own physician pronounced the wound the merest trifle. "If," said he, "the king were another man, he would go to a ball to-night." Meanwhile, the question of questions for her and her "court" was, Should she go or stay? In the ministry she had one friend and ally, Machault, guard of the seals, enemy of his colleague, D'Argenson, who was her enemy also. In this crisis, the two ministers united to crush her, and Machault allowed many days to pass before he came near her.

But at length he came, saluted her coldly, entered her cabinet, and remained closeted with her for half an hour. When

Jeux

Je rends adu majesté ce premier volume ce n'est pas moi
qui lay couvre l'œuvre. un petit mot de réflexion tu le mures
De l'esprit humain. Jay refait aujourd'uy De cinq manieres Diferentes
un petit passage De la honte De dans pouvoir jamais retrouver
L'ennemie Dont je l'avois sursé il y a un mois. que ce que cela,
prouve que legens ne j'aurais tenuer, que n'a j'aurais précédemment
L'ennemi pensés Dans fois en du vie, quil peu attendre continuellement
Le moment favorable, quel chien D'ennemi. mais il a des charmes;
et la delivré occupés D'ignorer l'avis l'oytes favorable,
non pour la gaine trouvée, D'ife tes humblesment Lay prêts
et les ailes Du vent

Voltaire

her bell rang, her friends found her in tears. "I must go," said she with broken voice; and her trunks were packed forthwith. But, in the nick of time, a lady of the court entered, and gave other advice, saying, "Who leaves the game loses it." Madame remained; the king returned to her; a scene of tears and tender reproaches restored her to more than the old influence, and in two days Machault and D'Argenson were dismissed and exiled. In three months the Abbé de Bernis was minister of foreign affairs; and he was followed soon by the Duke of Choiseul, another of madame's ministers, who remained long in power, and showed much ability in repairing the disasters of the war. Choiseul, a friend of the "philosophers," continued to be Voltaire's protector and correspondent after Madame de Pompadour's death, and indeed as long as he needed protection such as a minister of state could give. Thus the ascendancy of Pompadour favored the interests of the philosophic band, though neither she nor the ministries she created were at all times sufficient to save them from persecution. She had not been many months in possession of the government before Voltaire began to negotiate for the acquisition of lands in France, and about the time of the Duke of Choiseul's accession to power (November, 1758) he bought the estate of Ferney.

The fright caused in France by the wounding of the king defies description; the modernized mind cannot conceive it; and the excitement continued after it was known to the public that the "assassin," Pierre Damiens, was a pious, fanatical servant, a Jansenist, driven mad by wild talk on every side about the Bull Unigenitus,—a poor lunatic, without accomplices, without plan, and without rational motive. So far as he had any purpose, it was to call the king's attention, in a very emphatic manner, to the awful state of religion in France, and rouse him to interfere on behalf of the orthodox faith. In his pocket were found thirty louis d'or and a neatly bound New Testament.

Need I say that Voltaire pounced upon that little volume as a falcon upon its prey? The day after the event, the minister D'Argenson dispatched to Les Délices a circumstantial account of it, such as he wished to appear in Voltaire's history of the reign; the king, of course, behaving with *sang froid et*

tranquillité. From this long narrative Voltaire selected that one item of the Testament upon which to ring the changes for all kings and princes to hear. "In his pocket," wrote D'Argenson, "he had a New Testament, in 12mo, of a pretty edition." In every variety of utterance at his command, Voltaire made this comment: "Go over the whole history of Christian assassins, — and it is very long, — and you will see that they have all had the *Bible* in their pockets with their daggers, and never *Cicero*, *Plato*, or *Virgil*." Again, "Damiens is a dog gone mad from hearing convulsionist and Jansenist dogs barking at random."

The treatment to which this bewildered, virtuous man was subjected will always merit particular consideration as a record of the age. Mr. Carlyle might well have begun his series of pictures of the French Revolution with the execution of Damiens, in March, 1757, by way of showing what the French people had to overcome in themselves before they could so much as think of roughly handling a king. From the hour of his arrest to the moment of his death, a period of two months and twenty-three days, he was in torture whenever he was awake, so cruelly was he bound, chained, and confined. When, at last, the day of his execution came, he was taken in the morning to the torture-chamber, and there subjected to the greatest amount of anguish which the human frame is capable of enduring. The torture was administered with care and skill, so as to keep the poor wretch in the ecstasy of anguish as long as possible; surgeons standing by to aid the torturers in their fell work by giving them timely notice of coming insensibility, when the wedge would be withdrawn a few moments, and then reinserted, and driven gently home as he could bear it. Two hours of this; then rest, food, and wine. At three in the afternoon, he was taken to the place of execution by ways so circuitous that he was an hour and a half in reaching it; a small army guarding him, and all Paris in the streets to see him pass. The hellish apparatus of his execution not being ready, he was kept waiting half an hour longer, in full view of the preparations. At five, in the presence of a countless, unpitied multitude, many of whom were women, and some of high rank, who had ostentatiously sought good places he was bound, naked, upon a solid table placed on a lofty

platform. First, his right hand, with which he had struck the king, was burnt off; next, masses of flesh were torn from him by red-hot pincers, and melted lead and rosin poured into the wounds; lastly, a strong horse was attached to each of his four limbs, and an attempt was made to tear him to pieces. After a considerable period, it was found impossible to do this; and a message was sent for permission to cut the muscles of the joints, to facilitate the execution of this part of the sentence. This was refused; and the attempt was renewed, and was again unsuccessful. A second time word was dispatched that the horses could not tear the dying wretch asunder. The required permission was then given, and the muscles were severed; but it was not until both legs and one arm had been torn off that the prisoner expired.

From the moment when the execution began until he breathed his last was a period of an hour and a quarter. His body was burned; and the house which he had inhabited was purchased of its proprietor, and destroyed. The king not merely permitted this, but he rewarded extravagantly every person who had taken a leading part in the trial and execution. To each of the two judges who sentenced Damiens a pension for life of six thousand francs a year was granted. The lawyers, the torturers, the clerks, and the executioners were all bountifully recompensed; "more so," says Voltaire, "than officers who shed their blood for their country."

But the most awful fact of the case was that France approved the punishment, and Europe did not condemn it. When next the king appeared in public, though he had long ago lost the love of the people, he was greeted with all the enthusiasm to which he had been accustomed in the early years of his reign. He seemed to have regained his popularity, and to be again Louis the Well-Beloved. Some months after, a royal prince was born; and the king named him the Count D'Artois, "to console," as he said, "the province of that name for having given birth to such a monster, and to assure it of his continued protection." And all this occurred so recently that living men have seen that prince when he afterwards reigned over France as Charles X.

When we shudder at the sharp, short work of the guillotine, thirty-five years after, it is but just to think of the fate of

Pierre Damiens, and the pitiful disputes which crazed him. If the Jacobins did not torture, as well as kill, it was not because they had not had lessons in the practice; and the wildest of their utterances was holy wisdom's self compared with the folly of which the Bull Unigenitus was the central piece. Robespierre and his club soon passed, but that baleful thing tormented and corrupted France for two centuries.

Behold Pompadour, then, from being mistress of Louis, become mistress of France, and Voltaire deriving substantial advantage from her new ascendancy. She not only made him safe on French soil, but, to his great astonishment, she procured for him the renewal of his ancient pension of two thousand francs, which had been for several years unpaid, unclaimed, and almost forgotten. The Duke of Choiseul, also, caused the king to confirm, by special patent, the exemption of his Ferney estate from all taxation, — an exemption granted to a former proprietor by Henry IV. for some service unknown. In the whole kingdom, as the lord of Ferney frequently remarked, there were but two secular estates that enjoyed this privilege. Voltaire knew well the significance and protective force of such trifles; he valued them accordingly, and found opportunity ere long to testify his gratitude in a public and striking manner. With the Abbé de Bernis, the rosy "Babet" of his Paris days, he remained on terms of curious familiarity. When he wrote to congratulate him upon the red hat of cardinal, received in 1758, he still jested with him upon his old nickname and the rosy roundness of his cheeks. "Your Eminence," said he, "must be tired of compliments turning upon the color of your coat, — a color which I used to see upon your plump cheeks, and which, I think, must be upon them still. . . . Pardon the old Swiss his garrulity. May your Eminence preserve for him the favorable regard with which the lovely 'Babet' used to honor him."

At the very time when Damiens's penknife was giving Madame de Pompadour the power to "protect" the old Swiss, he was placed in relations with another of the belligerent courts, that of Elizabeth, Empress of Russia, — a connection that grew more intimate and confidential to the end of his life. The empress invited him to come to Petersburg and write a history of her father, Peter the Great, — a subject which had attracted

him ever since, as a young man of twenty-two, he had seen the Czar Peter rushing about Paris, sight-seeing. The invitation came to him through the Count of Bestucheff, the Russian ambassador at Paris, to whom he thus replied, in February, 1757: —

“Monsieur, I have received a letter which at first I thought written at Versailles, or in our Academy; it was you, monsieur, who did me the honor to address it to me. You propose to me what I have desired for thirty years; I cannot better conclude my career than in consecrating my last labors and my last days to such a work.

“I would make the journey to Petersburg if my health permitted it; but, in my present condition, I see that I shall be reduced to await in my retreat the material which you are pleased to promise me.

“This would be my plan: I would begin the work by a description of the flourishing condition in which the empire of Russia is to-day, including all that renders Petersburg agreeable to foreigners. I would describe the changes made at Moscow, the armies of the empire, its commerce, arts, and all that has made the government respectable.

“Then I should say, All this is a new creation; and I should enter upon the subject by making known the creator of those prodigies. My design, then, would be to give a precise idea of what the Emperor Peter the Great accomplished from his accession, year by year.

“If the Count of Schowalow [minister] will have the goodness, monsieur, as you flatter me he will, to send me documents upon those two subjects, — that is to say, upon the present condition of the empire, and upon all that Peter the Great performed, — with a map of Petersburg, one of the empire, the history of the discovery of Kamtschatka, and, in short, information upon everything which can contribute to the glory of your country, I shall not lose a moment, and I shall regard this labor as the consolation and glory of my old age.

“The series of medals which are offered me would be useless; they are to be found in several collections, and the material of those medals is of a value which I cannot accept. I could wish only that the Count of Schowalow would be pleased to assure me that her majesty the empress desires this monument to be raised to the glory of the emperor her father, and that she is willing to accept my pains.”

All was done by the Russian government that an author could desire. The medals were sent him, notwithstanding his objection, and documents continued to arrive. He set about

this new task, at the age of sixty-four, with the alacrity of a young man whose fame and fortune depended upon his success. He gave Count Schowalow his idea of what such a work ought to be: No details of war, unless those details illustrate something great and useful; no anecdotes of private life, unless they are characteristic of general manners; human weaknesses of the subject not to be concealed, especially when by overcoming them he has given a useful example,— the sole worthy end of all such writing being to correct and improve mankind. To give himself more freedom to omit and admit, he proposed to call the work, not the Life or History of Peter I., but “Russia under Peter I.” Such a title, he remarked, relieved him of the obligation to relate anecdotes which would diminish the glory of the Czar. In the course of the summer, we find him undertaking to find a home in Geneva for four young men whom the Russian government proposed to send to study in the land of Calvin.

In two years he published the first volume, one half the work, executed according to his plan and his principles. It revealed Russia to Europe and to herself; for he, and he alone, has possessed the art, in writing at the request of an autocrat, to utter the substantial truth concerning his subject, without giving offense or alarm. He knew how to make the homage acceptable to the empress which was implied in telling the truth about her father’s faults. He concluded by saying that, to *the Russians* Peter was a great man, and that *they* ought to regard him as such. In all Russia, let him be a hero. “But is he a hero to us? No; but he was a king, and a king badly reared; and he accomplished what, perhaps, a thousand sovereigns in his place would not have done. . . . There are still vast regions in Africa where men have need of a Czar Peter.”

I add one sentence from the description of St. Petersburg: “Thirty-five large churches are so many ornaments of the city, and among those churches there are five for foreigners, whether they be Roman Catholics, Reformed, or Lutherans: these are five temples erected to Tolerance, and so many examples to other nations.”

In these peaceful labors he passed the years, while war ravaged the heart of Europe and made the wilds of America more

savage still. One incident of the war touched him nearly in the first weeks of 1757. His old friend and "protector," the Duke of Richelieu, had risen suddenly to the height of popularity by his conquest of the island of Minorca, against the British fleet under command of Admiral Byng. The English ministry brought the admiral to trial on charges of treason and cowardice in presence of the enemy,—charges which tended to impair the lustre of Richelieu's exploit. Twenty years before, Voltaire had been intimate in England with the accused officer, then young in the service, and noted only as the son of Viscount Torrington, an admiral of old renown. Voltaire now wrote to Richelieu, suggesting that he should make an attempt to save his unfortunate antagonist by bearing testimony to his good conduct. Richelieu did this by writing a letter to Voltaire himself, in which he declared that Admiral Byng had done all that became a patriot and an officer, and that such was the opinion of the French fleet and army, witnesses of his conduct. On receiving this letter, he sent it directly to Byng himself, with a note of his own, in which he concealed their old intimacy, lest his interference should be attributed to personal regard: ¹—

“MONSIEUR, — Though scarcely known to you, I yet think it my duty to send you a copy of a letter which I have recently received from Marshal Richelieu; honor, humanity, justice, require me to transmit it to your hands. This testimony, so noble and so unexpected, of one of the most sincere and generous of my countrymen, gives me confidence that your judges will render you the same justice.”

He appears to have sent other documents to England exculpatory of the accused officer, and wrote urgent letters to friends, suggesting measures in his behalf. Nothing availed. “The city of London,” as Macaulay remarks, “called for vengeance, and the cry was echoed from every corner of the kingdom.” A timid ministry sought to appease the public with a victim, and thus Byng was executed “for an error of judgment, such as the greatest commanders have often committed, and have often acknowledged.” ²

Byng left grateful messages both to Richelieu and Voltaire,

¹ Voltaire to Count de Schornberg, October 31, 1769.

² Macaulay on Thackeray's Chatham, *Edinburgh Review*, 1834.

saying that the justice rendered him by "so generous a soldier" consoled him for the injustice of his own countrymen, and that he died the debtor of Voltaire also, to whom he sent a copy of his defense. All parties, as well English as French, united in commending the worthy endeavors of the Frenchmen to save an unfortunate enemy.

The noise of the war filled the earth. Voltaire himself, who hated war, was all aflame with patriotic enthusiasm, and went so far as to invent an engine of massacre, upon the plan of the Assyrian war chariots of old. He thought highly of his scheme, and mentioned it to an officer, who also approved it, and who sped away to Paris with a model for the inspection of the minister of war. The minister, too, deemed it worthy of consideration, and the inventor wrote to Richelieu, urging him to take it under his protection, and win a campaign with it against the Prussians. Six hundred men and six hundred horses, with these chariots of Cyrus, well loaded with hand-grenades, would destroy, he flattered himself, an army of ten thousand Prussians, provided the enterprise were managed by a man of pliant genius, like Richelieu, instead of a man of routine. "I know very well," he wrote to his hero, "that it is not my business to find out the most convenient way of killing men. But if a monk, with some charcoal, sulphur, and saltpetre, changed the art of war throughout this ill-conditioned globe, why should not a paper-smudger like myself render a little service to his country, *incognito*?"

His Assyrian chariots were not tried until, instead of hand-grenades, they carried the devilish machinery of the *mitrail-leuse*. It is by no means certain that his idea, even without that development, might not have been of use; for he designed his chariots to serve also as an adjunct to the artillery, and transport ammunition and forage. "It was," said he, "by conveying forage upon wagons, before there was any grass upon the ground, that the King of Prussia entered Bohemia by four roads, and struck terror. Rely upon it, Marshal Saxe would have used these war chariots of mine!"

During the whole of this war of seven years, he was in frequent correspondence with the King of Prussia, who seemed drawn towards him by an impulse he could not resist. In the direst extremity of his fortunes, when he had lost, for the mo-

ment, the hope of saving his kingdom, still he found relief in inditing long epistles in prose and verse to the idol of his youth. Voltaire replied with the forms of homage; but he could not forget Frankfort, Freytag, Schmidt, and the stolen effects, — least of all, the indignities done to Madame Denis, who now sat at his table, and did not fail to keep him in mind of what she had suffered. It is evident that six lines of good-humored apology to Madame Denis from the king — which the king owed to himself as much as to her — would have drawn the sting from this rankling wound; but Frederic, in an affair involving the duty of a man to a woman, was little more than the son of his father.

A few brief passages from their letters during these years of vicissitude will not be unwelcome to the reader. After the terrible reverses of the Prussians in the campaign of 1757, the king wrote in a despairing strain, intimating that he was resolved to die by his own hand rather than give his enemies the triumph of disposing of his destiny. Voltaire endeavored to argue him out of this idea.

“You wish to die! On the other hand, listen to your better reason. It tells you that you are not humiliated, and that you cannot be. It tells you that, being a man like another, there will remain to you, whatever happens, all that which can render other men happy, — estates, dignities, friends. A man who is only a king can think himself very unfortunate when he loses provinces; but a philosopher can do without provinces. . . . I have no interest in all that I say to you except the public good and yours. I am near my sixty-fifth year; I was born infirm; I have only a moment to live; I have been very unfortunate, as you know; but I should die happy if I left you upon the earth putting in practice what you have so often written.”

The king soon rallied, and, in his next letter (November, 1757), sent the verses which have been so often quoted and so much admired, ending, —

“Pour moi, menacé du naufrage,
Je dois, en affrontant l'orage,
Penser, vivre, et mourir en roi.”¹

¹ For my part, threatened with shipwreck, I must, facing the storm, think, live, and die like a king.

During the next campaign the Margravine of Bayreuth sent him ample details of her brother's exploits and varying fortune; but, soon after its close, she died, and the king earnestly besought him to perpetuate her memory by an ode worthy of her. Voltaire composed the poem, and sent it to the king, who acknowledged it thus, March 12, 1759:—

“I have received that ode, which cost you so little, which is very beautiful, and which certainly will do you no dishonor. It gives me the first moment of consolation I have had in five months. I pray you to have it printed, and to spread it in the four quarters of the globe. I shall not long delay to testify to you my gratitude for it. . . . You wish to know what Néaulme [Berlin publisher] is publishing. You ask *me* that question, who know not if Néaulme is still in the world; me, who have not in nearly three years put foot in Berlin; me, who know no other news than that of Russian and Austrian generals,—a kind of men for whom you care very little, and concerning whom I should be very glad not to be obliged to inform myself. Adieu. Live happily, and maintain the peace in your Swiss manor; for wars of the pen and wars of the sword rarely have happy issues. I know not what will be my destiny this year. In case of misfortune, I recommend myself to your prayers, and I ask of you a mass to get my soul out of purgatory, if, in the other world, there is a worse purgatory than the life I lead in this.”

The reply to this letter has not been preserved; but Fred-eric gathered from it an erroneous impression, which Voltaire at once endeavored to correct. The king had spoken of his intention to show his gratitude to the poet for the ode to his sister, and he inferred from Voltaire's answer that the poet wanted the cross and key, which he had worn at Berlin, and of which he had been rudely deprived at Frankfort. Not so.

“Your majesty [he wrote, March 27, 1759] says to me, in your last letter, that it seems I desire only the baubles of which you do me the honor to speak to me. It is true that, after more than twenty years' attachment, you *might* have refrained from taking away the marks of your favor, which had no other value in my eyes except that which was derived from the hand that gave them. I should not be able even to wear those marks of my ancient devotion to you during the war, as my lands are in France. It is true, they are upon the frontiers of Switzerland; it is even true that they are entirely free, and I pay nothing to France. I have in France property which yields sixty thousand francs of annual revenue, and my sovereign has

preserved for me by brevet the place of gentleman-in-ordinary of his chamber. . . . You have never known me. I am very far from asking you for the bagatelles for which you believe I have so much desire. I do not wish them at all; I wish only your favor. . . . I always told you the truth when I said to you that I wished to die near you. Your majesty treats me like the rest of the world; you mock me when you say that President Maupertuis is dying. The president has just had at Basle a lawsuit for the maintenance of a child. Would to God that I could have such a lawsuit! I am far from it; I have been very sick, and I am very old.

"I confess that I am very rich, very independent, very happy; but you are wanting to my happiness; and I shall soon die without having seen you. You care little for that, and I try not to care for it at all. I love your verses, your prose, your understanding, your hardy and firm philosophy. I was not able to live without you, nor with you. I am not now speaking to the king, to the hero; that is the affair of sovereigns. I am speaking to him who enchanted me, whom I loved, and with whom I am always angry" [*fâché*].

This was a little plainer language than he had ever before written to the king. Frederic replied in a tone still more decisive:—

"I congratulate you upon being once more gentleman-in-ordinary of the Well-Beloved. It will not be *his* patent which will immortalize you. . . . For my part, I pardon, in favor of your genius, all the tricks you played me at Berlin, all the libels of Leipsic, and all the things which you have said and printed against me, forcible, hard, and numerous as they are, without preserving the least rancor. It is not the same with my poor president, in whom you fixed your grip. I know not whether he is begetting children or bleeding at the lungs. Nevertheless one cannot but applaud him if he labors at the propagation of the species, when all the powers of Europe are striving to destroy it. . . . Adieu, Swiss Hermit! Do not be angry with Don Quixote, who threw into the fire the verses of Ariosto, which were not as good as yours; and have some indulgence for a German censor, who writes to you from the farthest confines of Silesia."

In another letter of nearly the same date, the king complains bitterly of the ferocities of the war:—

"The most polite nations carry on the contest like ferocious beasts. I am ashamed of human kind; I blush for the age. Let us confess the truth: the arts and philosophy are known only to a small number, while the great mass—the people and the ordinary members of the

aristocracy — remain what nature made them ; that is to say, wicked animals. Whatever reputation you have, my dear Voltaire, think not that the Austrian hussars know your writings. I can assure you that they are better judges of brandy than of beautiful verses and celebrated authors. We are going to begin soon a campaign which will be at least as rude as the last. God knows what will be the issue of it. But there is one thing I can assure you of positively : it is that they will not get me cheap ; and that, if I fall, the enemy will have to break the road to my destruction by a frightful carnage. Adieu. I wish you everything which I lack. N. B. It is said that your poem upon the ‘ Religion of Nature,’ the ‘ Philosophy of Good Sense,’ and the work of Helvetius upon the ‘ Human Mind ’ have been publicly burned at Paris. Admire how self-love flatters itself ! I draw a kind of glory from the fact that the epoch of the war which France wages against me is the same as that of the war waged at Paris against ‘ Good Sense.’ ”

Voltaire replied, June, 1759 : “ Again, I say, Oh, that you would put an end to this terrible war ! You are legislator, warrior, historian, poet, musician ; but you are also a philosopher. Home ! home ! home ! as soon as you can.”

Frederic, who wished nothing so much as to be able to follow this advice, answered, July 2, 1759 : —

“ You mock me when you talk to me of making peace. I do not give law to the Well-Beloved, to the Queen of Hungary, whom I adore, to the Russian empress, whom I abhor. . . . I love peace as much as you desire it ; but I wish it good, solid, and honorable. . . . Adieu. Health and prosperity to the author of the ‘ Henriade,’ the most malign and the most seductive of the men of genius who have ever been or ever will be in the world.” [Some days after.] “ Enjoy your hermitage ; trouble not the ashes of those (Maupertuis, for example) who repose in the tomb ; let death at least put an end to your unjust hatreds. Think that kings, after having fought for a long time, make peace at last. Will *you* never be able to make peace ? I believe you would be capable, like Orpheus, of descending to hell, not to persuade Pluto, not to bring back the lovely Emilie, but to pursue into that place of torment an enemy whom your rancor persecuted too much in this world. Sacrifice to me your vengeance ; do an action worthy of the beautiful maxims which you express with so much elegance and force in your works.”

These repeated allusions to the affair with Maupertuis, all of them, as Voltaire thought, showing the most complete per-

versity of judgment on the king's part, roused him at length to something like a burst of indignation. Thus he wrote to Frederic, April 21, 1760: —

“SIRE, — A little monk of Saint-Juste said to Charles V., ‘Sacred majesty, are you not tired of troubling the world? Must you still distress a poor monk in his cell?’ I am the monk; but you have not yet renounced the grandeur and miseries of the world, like Charles V. What cruelty in you to say to me that I calumniate Maupertuis! What interest have I to speak ill of him? What do his person and his memory concern me? I think only of dying, and my hour draws near: do not trouble it by unjust reproaches and hard sayings, which I feel the more because it is from you they come. You have done me wrong enough: you embroiled me forever with the King of France; you made me lose my offices and my pensions; you maltreated me at Frankfort, me and an innocent woman, — a woman esteemed, who was drawn in the mud and put into prison; and then, while honoring me with your letters, you spoil the sweetness of that consolation by bitter reproaches. Is it possible that it was you who treated me so, after I had been occupied for three years, although uselessly, in trying to serve you, without any other view than that of following my way of thinking?

“The greatest evil which your works have done is that they have enabled the enemies of philosophy, spread throughout Europe, to say, Philosophers cannot live in peace, and cannot live together. Behold a king who does not believe in Jesus Christ! He calls to his court a man who also does not believe in him; and he maltreats him! There is no humanity in the pretended philosophers, and God punishes some of them by the aid of others.

“This is what is said; this is what is printed on all sides: and while the fanatics are united, the philosophers are dispersed and unhappy. While, at the court of Versailles and elsewhere, I am accused of having encouraged you to write against the Christian religion, it is you who make me these reproaches, and add that triumph to the insults of fanatics! It is this which makes me hold the world in just horror. I am, happily, far from the world in my solitary domains. I shall bless the day when I shall cease, by dying, to have to suffer, and especially to suffer through you; but I shall die wishing you a happiness not possible, perhaps, in your rank, and which philosophy alone could have procured for you in the storms of your life, if fortune had permitted you to confine yourself to cultivating for a long time that foundation of wisdom which you have in you, — an admirable foundation, but perverted by the passions inseparable from a

great imagination, a little by bad temper, by painful situations which poured gall into your soul, and finally by the unfortunate pleasure which you have always taken in humiliating other men by saying and writing to them sharp things, — a pleasure unworthy of you, and so much the more unworthy as you are elevated above them by your rank and by your singular talents. You doubtless feel these truths.

“Pardon them as uttered by an old man who has little time to live, and who says them to you with so much the more confidence, because, being aware of his own defects and weaknesses, infinitely greater than yours, but less dangerous through his obscurity, he cannot be suspected by you of believing himself exempt from faults in order to give himself the right to complain of some of yours. He laments your faults as much as he does his own; and he wishes only to think of repairing before his death the fatal errors resulting from a deceptive imagination, while cherishing sincere wishes that so great a man as you may be as happy and as great in everything as he ought to be.”

Frederic, with six hundred thousand soldiers upon his hands, found time, in May, 1760, to write a long reply to this epistle:—

“I know very well [said he] that I have faults, and even great faults. I assure you that I am not indulgent toward myself, and that when I look within I forgive myself nothing. But I confess that this labor would be less unfruitful if I were in a situation where my soul was not obliged to suffer shocks so sudden and agitations so violent as those to which it has been exposed for a long time, and to which it will again, probably, be exposed. Peace has flown away with the butterflies; there is no more question of it at all. On all sides new efforts are making, as if we were going to fight to all eternity.

“I do not enter into a rehearsal of the past. You have doubtless been guilty of the greatest wrongs toward me. Your conduct would not have been borne by any philosopher. I have forgiven you all, and I even wish to forget all; but if you had not had to do with a fool [*fou*] in love with your beautiful genius, you would not have come off nearly as well as you did. Consider it, then, a thing said, once for all: I will not hear that niece of yours spoken of again; she bores me, and she has not as much merit as her uncle to atone for her faults. The servant of Molière is spoken of; but no one will ever speak of the niece of Voltaire. . . .

“Adieu. Live in peace in your retreat, and talk not of dying. You are only sixty-two, and your soul is still full of that fire which animates bodies and sustains them. You will see me underground; yes, and half the present generation besides. You will have the pleasure

of making a malign couplet upon my tomb, and I shall not mind it; I give you absolution for it in advance. You will not do ill to prepare matter for it even now; perhaps you will be able to use it sooner than you believe. For my part, I shall go down below there to tell Virgil there is a Frenchman who has surpassed him in his art. I shall say the same to Sophocles and Euripides. I shall speak to Thucydides of your history, to Quintus Curtius of your 'Charles XII. ;' and I shall get myself stoned, perhaps, by all those dead men, jealous that a single individual has united in himself their different merits. But Maupertuis, to console them, will make Zoile read in a corner the Akakia.

"It is necessary to put a *remora* in letters which one writes to indiscreet people; for it is the only way to hinder them from reading those letters at the street corners and in open market."

This letter, we should think, would have ended their correspondence forever, or, at least, as long as Madame Denis poured out Voltaire's chocolate at Ferney. On the contrary, these frank utterances, so unusual between king and citizen, appear to have relieved both their minds, and they continued to write as before. Voltaire protested, in reply to the hint of his indiscretion, that he had never shown or read the king's letters to a mortal, — a falsehood which had some excuse in the fact that he was corresponding with a public enemy. On one occasion, in 1759, he felt compelled, from a due regard to his own head, to disclose the contents of a large packet of Frederic's prose and verse, among which was an ode, signed "Frédéric," which satirized Louis the Well-Beloved without reserve, speaking of him as "a feeble monarch, the plaything of Pompadour," sunk in ignoble sloth at Versailles. On receiving this packet, he discovered, to his horror and alarm, that it had been opened on its way from Prussia. If this ode should be published, there were couplets in it which all the world would believe had been written or retouched by him. The King of France, he thought, would be sure to believe it, and hold him guilty of high treason; "and, even worse," as he remarks, "culpable toward Madame de Pompadour." He sent for the French Resident at Geneva and showed him the packet. The Resident certified that the seal had been evidently tampered with, and advised him that there was no other part to take but to send the whole to the Duke of Choiseul, then at the head of the French ministry. Choiseul, himself a versifier,

made light of the ode, and even replied to it in some verses well calculated to irritate the Prussian king. These he sent to Voltaire, and told him he should publish them if Frederic's ode appeared in print. Choiseul alluded to the miserable childhood of Frederic, whom "a *just* father wished to stifle in his cradle," and replied to his mention of Pompadour by observing that Frederic, in condemning the tenderness of the King of France for his mistress, was speaking of what he had never experienced, and *could* know nothing about.

"I might," says Voltaire, "if I had wished to divert myself, have seen the King of France and the King of Prussia waging a war of verses; which would have been a new scene in the world. I gave myself another pleasure, — that of being wiser than Frederic. I wrote to him that his ode was exceedingly fine, but that he ought not to give it to the public, as he did not stand in need of that kind of glory, and ought not to shut every door of reconciliation with the King of France, embittering him past remedy, and forcing him to put forth the utmost exertions to obtain a just vengeance. I added that my niece had burned his ode, in the mortal fear of its being imputed to me. He believed me, and thanked me, not without some reproaches for having burned the finest verses he had ever written in his life. The Duke of Choiseul, on his part, kept his word, and was discreet."

Voltaire improved this opening to urge both belligerents to make peace; and the French minister wrote him several letters, designed to be communicated to Frederic, in which that king was covertly solicited to make overtures. The burden of Voltaire's letters to Frederic for several months was the peaceful dispositions of Choiseul. Frederic, menaced on every side by powerful foes, and worn down in health and resources by four years of fiercest warfare, met these insincere and trivial advances with magnificent disdain.

"You speak to me always of peace [he wrote, June 21, 1760]. I shall make no peace without the English, and they will make no peace without me. What signifies that pacific tone which your Duke of Choiseul affects toward me? You tell me he cannot act according to his way of thinking. What matters to me his way of thinking, if he is not free to conduct himself in accordance therewith? I abandon the tripod of Versailles to the craft of those who amuse themselves

with intrigues. I have no time to lose in these futilities; and, though I perish, I would rather apply to the Grand Mogul than to Louis the Well-Beloved to help me out of the labyrinth in which I find myself. I said nothing against him (that is, before the war). I repent bitterly having written in verse more good of him than he deserved. And if, during the present war, of which I regard him as the promoter, I have not spared him in some pieces, it is because he has been guilty of outrage towards me, and because I defend myself with all the arms I have, however ill-sharpened they may be. These trifles, besides, are known to no one. I comprehend nothing of those personalities, unless you refer to the Pompadour. I believe, however, that a King of Prussia owes no regards to a Demoiselle Poisson, especially if she is arrogant, and is wanting in the respect due to crowned heads."

And so this war raged on. During the last two campaigns Frederic found little opportunity to write letters. Several times the family at Les Délices gave him up for lost, and often Madame Denis had the consolation of pitying him; until, through his own indomitable heart, the valor of his troops, the constancy of his subjects, the subsidies of the English, and the timely death of the Empress Elizabeth, he suddenly issued from the contest in 1763, a victor, his kingdom torn, bleeding, desolate, but Silesia his own, and himself free to write comic verses on whomsoever he would.

Propos of the British subsidies, Voltaire preserves an anecdote of the moment when a storm drove the English fleet from the coast of France. "Well," said Frederic to the English ambassador, "what are you doing at present?" "We are letting God work," was the answer. "I did not know," said Frederic, "that you had that ally." The ambassador rejoined, "He is the only one we have to whom we pay no subsidies." "Also," said the king, "he is the only one who does not help you."

Not less amusing was Voltaire's alacrity in preparing to pursue Freytag and Schmidt whenever there was a prospect of a French army holding Frankfort. "If you pass by Frankfort," he wrote to Richelieu, early in the war, "Madame Denis earnestly entreats you to have the goodness to cause to be sent to her the four ears of two scoundrels: one named Freytag, Resident-without-wages of the King of Prussia at Frankfort, who has never had any compensation but what he has stolen; the

other is Schmidt, a rogue of a merchant, counselor of the King of Prussia." Later, when there seemed a probability of the Prince of Soubise taking the city, he urged Collini to bring suit for the stolen effects, and drew up forms of petition for him to sign and present to the French commander, promising to back his application with all the influence he could command. "Never," he wrote to D'Argental in August, 1759, "will I forgive Frederic's infamous treatment of my niece, nor his hardihood [*hardiesse*] in writing me flatteries twice a month without having repaired his wrongs."

It was under the spur of this feeling that he wrote at Les Délices the satirical memoirs of his connection with Frederic, which contain, along with much amusing narrative and innocent badinage, one or two passages of a character which nothing could justify, and of which he himself repented. These memoirs he fully intended to destroy, and did endeavor to destroy, when, in later years, he had recovered from his resentment. His secretary, Wagnière, tells us why he did not succeed: "The manuscript of his memoirs upon the King of Prussia was stolen from him in 1768. He had never shown them to any one whatever; but he had the unfortunate habit of leaving his library open and his papers exposed, notwithstanding the representations I made him. He discovered the theft of those memoirs and of some other manuscripts when, having burned the original, he looked for the two copies of my making, to burn them also."¹

I may add that after the death of Maupertuis, in 1759, Frederic urged D'Alembert to accept the presidency of the Berlin Academy. "I advise you," wrote Voltaire to his friend, "never to go to Berlin and fill Maupertuis's place; you would repent of it." Upon D'Alembert's repeated refusals, the king made himself president, and retained the post as long as he lived. According to Voltaire, Maupertuis died in the odor of sanctity between two Capuchins. "He was sick a long time," added his old enemy, "of a repletion of pride; but I did not believe him to be either a hypocrite or an imbecile."

During this period, besides his work upon Peter of Russia, he continued to write articles for the Encyclopædia as long as it was permitted to appear, and did not forget his beloved

¹ 2 Mémoires sur Voltaire, 53.

dramatic art. In 1759, good taste and good sense won at Paris the tardy triumph of excluding spectators from the stage of the national theatre. The veteran dramatist was so exhilarated by this news that he began at once upon a new tragedy requiring ample room for its presentation, that "Tancrede" of his so familiar still to the stage of Christendom. The subject seized him with violence, and the first draft was written in a month. His letters boil with it. "To-day, my dear angel," he wrote to D'Argental, "is May 19 [1759], and it was on the 22d of April that an old fool began a tragedy, finished yesterday, — finished, but not done. . . . The liberty and honor given to the French theatre warmed my old brain. Madame Denis and myself have cried over the piece; but we are too near relations of it, and we must not believe *our* tears. It is necessary to make my angels weep and flap their wings. You will have upon the stage flags borne in triumph, arms hung upon columns, processions of warriors, a poor girl exceedingly tender and resolute, and still more unhappy, the greatest and most unfortunate of men, a father in despair. The fifth act begins with a *Te Deum*, and ends with a *De Profundis*. . . . Let us give the piece *incognito*. Let us once enjoy this pleasure; it is very amusing."

Thus in many letters he pours out his heart upon the new play, ever correcting, revising, recasting, as though he really were "the young, unknown author" to whom he meant to attribute it. It must be owned, however, that few unknown authors take half the trouble to succeed which this veteran never failed to take, whether he was composing a tragedy or a pamphlet.

CHAPTER XXII.

COUNTRY GENTLEMAN AND FARMER.

WHILE Frederic was defending his throne with such resolution, Voltaire was tranquilly preparing an abode on the soil of his native country. He could not feel at home among the sons of Calvin, and, it appears, he did not feel quite safe. Calvinists are formidable people if they are once thoroughly roused. He had already provoked them nearly to the limit of their endurance, and Wagnière was daily copying things which, being published, might render his residence in Geneva untenable. "Your magistrates," he wrote in December, 1758, to M. Tronchin, of Lyons, "are respectable; they are wise; the society of Geneva is equal to that of Paris. But your people are a little arrogant, and your priests a little dangerous."

When the ascendancy of Madame de Pompadour and her ministers gave him assurance that he might safely reside at least upon the outer edge of France, he thought first of retiring to Lorraine, the province assigned to Stanislas, "King of Poland," and he wrote to the king on the subject, saying that he had half a million francs to invest in lands, and contemplated buying an estate and habitation for his old age near his Marcus Aurelius. Stanislas consulted the French government upon the project, and the Duke de Choiseul replied, "Your majesty knows him well enough to decide for yourself." Ere long the Italian author, Bettinelli, arrived at Les Délices, charged with a mission from the King of Poland to Voltaire. Stanislas strongly desired his company and his half-million investment, and the Italian was to say how welcome both would be in Lorraine. Bettinelli has left us an amusing account of his first interview with Voltaire:—

"When I arrived at Les Délices [November, 1758] he was in his garden. I went towards him, and told him who I was. 'What!' cried he, 'an Italian, a Jesuit, a Bettinelli! This is too much honor for

my cabin. I am only a peasant, as you see,' he added, showing me his stick, which had a weeding-fork at one end and a pruning-knife at the other. 'It is with these tools that I sow my wheat like my salad, grain by grain; but my harvest is more abundant than that which I sow in books for the good of mankind.'

"His singular and grotesque appearance made an impression upon me for which I was not prepared. Under a cap of black velvet, which came down to his eyes, there was a big peruke, which covered three quarters of his face, making his nose and chin still more prominent than they are in his portraits. His person was enveloped in a pelisse from his head to his feet. His look and smile were full of expression. I told him of the pleasure I felt at finding him in so good a state of health, which allowed him to brave in this way the rigor of winter.

"'Oh! you Italians,' he replied, 'imagine that we must squat in our holes, like the marmots which inhabit the summits of those mountains of ice and snow; but your Alps are for us only a spectacle and a beautiful perspective. Here upon the borders of my Lake Lemán, defended against the north wind, I do not envy you your lakes Como and Guarda. In this solitary place, I represent Catullus in his little island of Sirmio. He composed there beautiful elegies, and I write here good Georgics.'

"I then presented him the letter which the King of Poland had given me for him. At the first glance, I saw plainly that he divined the object of my visit, and that some epigram was about to fall upon my royal commission.

"'Oh, my dear,' cried he, taking the letter from my hands, 'stay with us! We breathe here the air of liberty, the air of immortality. I have just been investing a pretty large sum of money in the purchase of a little domain near this place. I think of nothing but to terminate there my life, far from scoundrels and tyrants.'

"These few words of the wily old man made me understand that the time had passed for entering into negotiations, and deprived me at one stroke of the honors of my embassy."¹

The ambassador was only a few days too late. In the first half of November, 1758, Voltaire had agreed to buy, in fee simple, the ancient estate and seigneurie of Ferney, in Burgundy, on the northern shore of Lake Lemán, about three miles and a half from Geneva. The village of Ferney was then a mere hamlet of forty or fifty inhabitants, who were very poor and much oppressed, as all peasants then were. The

¹ Voltaire aux Délices, par Desnoiresterres, page 331.

château was so old and inadequate that the purchaser set about rebuilding it forthwith, himself being both architect and superintendent of the works. He was well content with the result of his labors; and indeed he produced, with remarkable celerity, a plain, roomy, substantial stone mansion, of fourteen bedrooms, in what he flattered himself was "the Italian taste." "It is not a palace," he wrote, "but a commodious country house, with lands adjacent, which produce much hay, wheat, straw, and oats. I have some oaks as straight as pines, which touch the sky, that would render great service to our navy, if we had one." He had also a little ugly old parish church too close to his house, to which there was a curé, and he was seigneur over all, with the rights and privileges appertaining to seigneurie. He pushed on his château with such energy and diligence that he could have removed to it in the summer of 1759, if a stress of politics had made it desirable.

He was going to be a farmer in his declining years. The out-of-door occupations, in which he had indulged during his residence in Switzerland, had so improved his health that he resolved to continue and increase them. He told his friends that his way of life in his retreat had benefited him essentially. "Four years ago," he wrote in 1759, to his old friend Cideville, "I made my arrangements to die; but I find myself stronger than I have ever been, building, planting, rhyming, and writing the history of that Russian empire which avenges and humiliates us." And he wrote to D'Argental, "I complain according to custom; but in truth I am astonishingly well, and so happy amid the public calamities that I am ashamed of myself." To his fee-simple of Ferney, therefore, he immediately added a life-purchase of the adjacent seigneurie of Tournay, consisting of a large farm and an old château; or, to use the terms of the agreement, "the château, estate, and seigneurie of Tournay, barns, stables, meadows, fields, high vines and low vines, woods, forest, honorary seignorial rights," etc.; for which he was to pay a sum equal to ten years' rent, or thirty-five thousand francs, and make permanent improvements to the value of twelve thousand francs more.¹

A herd of cows was part of this purchase; he became a raiser of cattle, and employed a force of sixteen working oxen

¹ Voltaire et le Président De Brosses, page 45.

on his farms. At Les Délices he had begun the establishment of a breeding stable for horses, and this he now enlarged, increasing his six mares to ten. The Marquis de Voyer, the steward of the French king's stables, hearing of this new taste of the author of "Zaïre," offered him a fine stallion, which the poet accepted. "My seraglio is ready," he wrote to the marquis in May, 1759; "nothing is wanting but the sultan which you have promised me. So much has been written of late upon population that I wish at least to people the land of Gex with horses, being little able to have the honor of increasing my own species." In these various operations he kept thirty persons in continual employment, and maintained upon his estates, in all, as Wagnière informs us, more than sixty.

Nor was he one of the amateur farmers whose potatoes cost them, as Washington Irving used to say of his own, "sixpence apiece." He appears to have had farms which were as profitable as they were beautiful, and he assures us that he managed all the details of their culture himself. His letters for the next ten years teem with allusions to his farming. He exulted in his great barn, filled with the products of his lands:—

"A vast rustic house, with wagons loaded with the spoils of the fields coming and going by four great gate-ways. The pillars of oak, which sustain the whole frame, are placed at equal distances upon pedestals of stone; long stables are seen on the right and on the left. Fifty cows, properly fastened, occupy one side, with their calves; the horses and oxen are on the other side; their fodder falls into their racks from immense mows above; the floors where the grain is threshed are in the middle, and you know that all the animals lodged in their several places in this great edifice have a lively sense that the forage, the hay, the oats, which it contains, belong to them of right. To the south of these beautiful monuments of agriculture are the poultry-yards and sheep-folds; to the north are the presses, store-rooms, fruit-houses; to the east are the abodes of the manager and thirty servants; toward the west extend large meadows, pastured and fertilized by all these animals, companions of the labor of man. The trees of the orchard, loaded with fruits, small and great, are still another source of wealth. Four or five hundred bee-hives are set up near a little stream which waters this orchard. The bees give to the possessor a considerable harvest of honey and wax, without his troubling himself with all the fables which are told of that industrious creature; without

endeavoring in vain to learn whether that nation lives under the rule of a pretended queen, who presents her subjects with sixty to eighty thousand children. There are some avenues of mulberry-trees as far as the eye can reach, the leaves of which nourish those precious worms which are not less useful than the bees. A part of this vast inclosure is formed by an impenetrable rampart of hawthorn, neatly clipped, which rejoices the senses of smell and sight.”¹

In other letters we see him a zealous and patriotic tree-planter, sending wagons all the way to Lyons for loads of young trees, and urging country friends to follow his example. He formed a nursery, also, from which he every year enriched his plantations. “It is certain,” he wrote to the inspector-general of French nurseries, “that the forests of France have been too much neglected, as well as horse-breeding, and I fear that we shall soon be without the means of warming ourselves. I am planting walnut and chestnut trees, upon which I shall never see walnuts or chestnuts, but the mania of people of my kind is to labor for posterity.” His plantations and his colts were among his favorite objects. As the years went on, he formed a park and gardens about his new abode, three miles in circuit, which reminded visitors of what they had seen in England, where rural tastes were already well-nigh universal. One traveler describes them thus:—

“The garden is very beautiful and very large, forming with the park an extensive inclosure. In the park there is a fine plantation of oaks, lindens, and poplars, besides beautiful and long avenues. The view is extremely fine. Here, there is foliage and shrubbery, always green; there, a verdant lawn surrounded with clumps of bushes. In the midst is a large and ancient linden, with dense foliage, which overshadows the shrubbery with its thick branches. This is called the cabinet of Voltaire; it is there that he works. Near by is a little building for silk-worms, which serve him for recreation. Not far from it is a lightning-rod, the chain of which descends into a fountain. Adjacent to the silk-worm house, there is a field, which is called Voltaire’s field, because he cultivates it with his own hands. This park contains, besides, some beautiful labyrinths, a large peach orchard, lovely beds of flowers, vines of excellent grapes, kitchen and fruit gardens, the walls of which are entirely covered with pear-trees and peach-trees. Mont Blanc, which is seen covered with snow, and the gardens, filled with flowers on all sides, form a contrast difficult to find elsewhere, and

¹ Voltaire to Dupont. June, 1769.

afford an enchanting prospect. Near the château is a bath-house, a little marble edifice, supplied with hot and cold water at will, water being warmed in a boiler placed in a recess outside."

All this involved much out-of-door exercise, and he enjoyed it with a zest which the ordinary amateur little knows. For two or three years, he was full to overflowing of this new occupation of founding a great country home.

"I owe life and health [he wrote to Madame du Deffand] to the course I have taken. If I dared I would believe myself wise, so happy am I. I have lived only since the day when I chose my retreat; every other kind of life would now be insupportable to me. Paris is necessary to you; to me it would be mortal; every one must remain in his element. I am very sorry that mine is incompatible with yours, and it is assuredly my only affliction. You wished also to try the country; it is not suitable to you. The taste for proprietorship and labor is absolutely necessary when you live in the country. I have very extensive possessions, which I cultivate. I make more account of your drawing-room than of my grain-fields and my pastures; but it was my destiny to end my career between drills, cows, and Geneva."

To Cideville also: "I have adopted the scheme of investing part of my fortune in lands; the King of Prussia will not ravage them, and they will always bear a little grain. Property in paper depends upon fortune, property in land only upon God. If you manage your estate at Launai, you know that that occupation consumes a little time; but confess that you lose at Paris much more. I am managing all the detail of three estates almost contiguous to my hermitage of Les Délices; I have the insolence to build a château in the Italian taste. That will not hinder you, my old friend, from having your 'Peter the Great,' and a tragedy in a taste somewhat new."

He was particularly happy in the thought, Frenchman as he was, that he was no longer an exile from the land of his birth. An exile he was from Paris; and to a true Parisian that is exile in the most poignant sense of the word. But to the rest of Europe he was an exile no more; for he had houses and lands in France. He had even enjoyed a public and formal welcome to his seigneurie of Tourney. "I made my entry," he wrote, like Sancho Panza into his island. Nothing was

wanting to me but his paunch. The curé harangued me. Chouet [previous tenant] gave me a splendid repast, in the taste of those of Horace and Boileau, provided by the eating-house keeper of the next village. The people frightened my horses with musketry and torpedoes; the girls brought me oranges in baskets decorated with ribbons." He was a Frenchman again! The strength of this feeling was shown in the promptness with which he corrected a remark upon his exile in one of Lord Lyttleton's Dialogues of the Dead, which appeared in 1760. One of these celebrated Dialogues was between Boileau and Pope, in the course of which Voltaire came under discussion and received very polite treatment. Boileau observes that France, too, besides England, had recently produced some excellent authors, chief among whom was Voltaire, whose fame resounded in all parts of Europe; to which Pope responds with that famous compliment: "Other writers excel in some one particular branch of wit or science; but when the King of Prussia drew Voltaire from Paris to Berlin, he had a whole academy of *belles-lettres* in him alone." Boileau assigns to Voltaire the origin of the new system of writing history, of which the aim was to exhibit the manners and condition of man, and the causes which have led to changes in either. Further on he laments the excessive freedoms of some of Voltaire's writings, and expresses a hope that Voltaire before his death will correct or suppress whatever in any of them tends to promote vice or impiety. Pope assenting, Boileau asks, "Has England been free from all seductions of this nature?" Pope replies, "No; but the French have the art of rendering vice and impiety more agreeable than the English." Boileau accepts the compliment to the talents of his countrymen, but hopes that both nations will agree in thinking that "true wisdom is virtue, and true virtue is religion." Pope concludes, "I would have the French be perpetual competitors with the English in manly wit and substantial learning. But let the competition be friendly."

In the first edition, Voltaire was spoken of as an exile. He was in the habit still of receiving and reading English books, and probably the Dialogues came in the same parcel as Tristram Shandy, the "book of the season" of 1760. Writing to Algarotti, in French, he adds three lines in English: "Have

you read 'Tristram Shandy?' This is a very unaccountable book, and an original one; they run mad about it in England." Upon reading the Dialogues, in which he was accused of writing too freely and of being an exile, he wrote to Lord Lyttleton a letter in his best English, dating it from "My castle of Ferney, in Burgundy."

"I have read the ingenious Dialogues of the Dead. I find page 134 that I am an *exile*, and guilty of some excesses in writing. I am obliged (and perhaps for the honour of my country) to say I am not an exile, because I have not committed the excesses the author of the Dialogues imputes to me.

"Nobody raised his voice higher than mine in favour of the rights of human kind, yet I have not exceeded even in that virtue.

"I am not settled in Switzerland, as he believes. I live on my own lands in France; retreat is becoming to old age, and more becoming in one's own possessions. If I enjoy a little country-house near Geneva, my manors and my castles are in Burgundy: and if my king has been pleased to confirm the privileges of my lands, which are free from all tributes, I am the more indebted to my king.

"If I were an *exile*, I should not have obtained from my court many a passport for English noblemen. The service I rendered to them entitles me to the justice I expect from the noble author.

"As for religion, I think, and I hope he thinks with me, that God is neither a presbyterian, nor a lutheran, nor of the low church, nor of the high church, but God is the father of the noble author and mine.

"I am, with respect, his most humble servant, VOLTAIRE,
Gentleman of the King's Chamber."

The English author's reply, though doubtless civilly intended, was not quite agreeable to Voltaire. Lord Lyttleton promised to correct the error complained of, but held to his intimation of impiety, and made light of the honors bestowed by the King of France:—

"To do you justice is a duty I owe to truth and myself: and you have a much better title to it than from the *passports* you say you have procured for English noblemen. You are entitled to it, sir, by the high sentiments of respect I have for you, which are not paid to the *privileges* you tell me your king has confirmed to your lands, but to the *noble talents* God has given you, and the superior rank you hold in the republic of letters. The favors done you by your sovereign are an honor to *him*, but add little lustre to the name of Voltaire. I

entirely agree with you 'that God is the father of all mankind,' and should think it blasphemy to confine his goodness to a sect; nor do I believe that any of his creatures are good in his sight, if they do not extend their benevolence to all his creation. These opinions I rejoice to see in your works, and shall be very happy to be convinced that the liberty of your thoughts and your pen upon subjects of philosophy and religion never exceeded the bounds of this generous principle, which is authorized by revelation as much as by reason; or that you disapprove in your hours of sober reflection any irregular sallies of fancy, which cannot be *justified*, though they may be *excused*, by the vivacity and fire of a great genius."

To this Voltaire replied in French, being obliged by indisposition to dictate his answer: —

"Permit me only to observe that it is not a mere *I say* that I have caused passports to be obtained for some English gentlemen, but that *it is true*. I have been so happy as to procure passports for the son of Mr. Fox and all Mr. Campbell's family, as well as for three other sick Englishmen, who had been recommended to me by Dr. Tronchin. To me it is both a duty and a pleasure to serve any gentleman of your nation; this is the only right I have to your favors, though every man derives the same from your justice. I presume, therefore, to entreat your lordship to be so kind as to cause to be printed at the end of your book, as well as in all the public papers, the annexed little billet. Your lordship would not, I am sure, have me die with a complaint in my mouth against the person I esteem the most of any living.

"We were mistaken, in page 134 of the Dialogues, in saying that M. de Voltaire was banished from France on account of his writings. He still resides in that kingdom, in the county of Tourney, of which he is lord. This county is a free district in Burgundy, in the neighborhood of Geneva, and the owner has never been exiled."

As this note does not appear in the editions accessible, the author may not have complied with the request in all its extent; and the less as the reading world could not have been ignorant that Voltaire had been exiled many times.

From 1758 to 1764 he was still an occasional resident of Geneva, but gradually withdrew from the soil of that republic, to settle finally at Ferney. He was never in such exuberant spirits as at this time, never in such excellent health, never engaged in so many affairs, never so prompt with pen and deed in the promotion of his objects.

CHAPTER XXIII.

VISITORS AT LES DÉLICES.

BEFORE entering upon the most important period of his career, let us pause a moment, and accompany two of his numberless visitors to the house so conveniently near Geneva. We can with their aid see him and hear him at the time when he was in the full tide of his improvements at Ferney and Tournay. First, Marmontel, then an author of distinction. In 1760 Marmontel spent some days at Les Délices, and has left a narrative of his visit which is highly entertaining.

MARMONTEL AT LES DÉLICES.

“Nothing could be more singular or more original than the reception Voltaire gave us. He was in bed when we arrived. He extended his arms to us, and wept for joy while he embraced me. He embraced the son of his old friend, M. Gaulard, with the same emotion. ‘You find me dying,’ said he; ‘do you come to restore me to life, or to receive my last sighs?’ My companion was alarmed at this preface; but I, who had a hundred times heard Voltaire say he was dying, gave Gaulard a gentle sign of encouragement. And indeed, a moment afterward, the dying man, making us sit down by his bedside, said, ‘My dear friends, how happy I am to see you! — particularly at the moment when I have a man with me whom you will be charmed to hear. It is M. de l’Ecluse, the surgeon dentist of the late King of Poland, now the lord of an estate near Montargis, and who has been pleased to come to repair the irreparable teeth of Madame Denis. He is a charming man; but don’t you know him?’ ‘The only L’Ecluse that I know,’ answered I, ‘is an actor of the old comic-opera house.’ ‘’Tis he, my friend, — ’tis he himself. If you know him, you have heard the song of the “Grinder,” which he plays and sings so well.’ And there was Voltaire instantly imitating L’Ecluse, and with his bare arms and sepulchral voice playing the ‘Grinder’ and singing the song: —

‘Oh, where can I put her?
My sweet little girl!
Oh, where can I put her?’

We were bursting with laughter, and he was quite serious. 'I imitate him very ill,' said he; 'it is L'Ecluse that you must hear, and his song of the "Spinner," and that of the "Postilion," and the quarrel of the Applewoman with Vadé! It is truth itself. Oh, you will be delighted. Go and speak to Madame Denis. I, ill as I am, will get up to dine with you. We'll eat some wild fowl and listen to M. de l'Ecluse. The pleasure of seeing you has suspended my ills, and I feel myself quite revived.'

"Madame Denis received us with that cordiality which made her so charming. She introduced M. de l'Ecluse to us; and at dinner Voltaire engaged him by the most flattering praises to afford us the pleasure of hearing him. He displayed all his talents, and we appeared delighted with them. This was very requisite, for Voltaire would not have pardoned us a feeble applause.

"The walk in his gardens was employed in speaking of Paris, the 'Mercure,' the Bastille (of which I said only a word), the theatre, and the Encyclopædia. When we returned from our walk he played a game or two of chess with M. Gaulard, who, respectfully, let him win. Afterward he again spoke of the theatre and of the revolution Madame Clairon had introduced. 'Is, then, the change that has taken place in her somewhat prodigious?' said he. 'It is,' I replied 'a new talent; it is the perfection of art; or, rather, it is nature herself, such as your imagination can paint her in her greatest beauty.'

"My mind and language being warm, I endeavored to make him comprehend the natural and sublime manner in which she performed Camille, Roxane, Hermione, Ariane, and Electre. I exhausted the little eloquence I had to inspire in him that enthusiasm for Clairon with which I was filled, and enjoyed, while I spoke, the emotion to which I gave birth. At last, addressing himself to me, 'Well, my dear friend,' said he, with transport, 'it is just like Madame Denis; she has made an astonishing, an incredible progress. I wish you could see her play Zaïre, Alzire, Idamé! Talent can go no further.' Madame Denis playing Zaïre! Madame Denis compared to Clairon! I was thunder-struck; so true it is that taste accommodates itself to the objects it can enjoy, and that this wise maxim,

'When we have not what we love,
We must love what we have,'

is indeed not only a lesson of Nature, but a means she husbands to procure us pleasures.

"We resumed our walk, and while M. de Voltaire was talking to M. Gaulard of his ancient friendship for the father of this young man, I, on my side, was conversing with Madame Denis, and recalling the

good old times to her memory. In the evening I put Voltaire on the chapter of the King of Prussia. He spoke of him with a kind of cold magnanimity, like a man who disclaimed a too easy revenge, or as an undeceived lover pardons, in the mistress he has left, the rage and indignation she excited.

“At supper the conversation turned on the men of letters he most esteemed; and in the number it was easy for me to distinguish those he loved from the bottom of his heart. They were not those who most boasted of being in favor with him. Before he went to bed he read to us two new cantos of ‘La Pucelle,’ and Madame Denis informed us that, since he had been at Les Délices, it was the only day he had passed without retiring to his cabinet.

“The next day we had the discretion to leave him at least a part of his morning, and sent him word that we should wait till he rang. He was visible about eleven. He was still in bed. ‘Young man,’ said he, ‘I hope you have not renounced poetry: let us see some of your new productions. I conceal nothing; each should have his turn.’ More intimidated before him than I had ever been, whether it was that I had lost the ingenuous confidence of early youth, or that I felt more intimately than ever how difficult it is to write good verse, I resolved with difficulty to recite to him my epistle to the poets. He was highly pleased. He asked me if the poem was known at Paris. I answered that it was not. ‘Then,’ said he, ‘you must send it to the Academy; it will make some noise there.’ I represented to him that I had allowed myself a license of opinion in it at which many would be alarmed. ‘I know an honorable lady,’ returned he, ‘who confessed that one day, after having proudly reproved a too bold lover, the tender words escaped her, “Charming, impudent wretch!” The Academy will do the same.’

“Before dinner he took me to pay some visits at Geneva: and, talking of the way in which he lived with the inhabitants, ‘It is very pleasing,’ said he, ‘to live in a country where its sovereigns send to ask you for your carriage, that they may come and dine with you.’ His house was open to them; they passed whole days there; and, as the gates of the city were shut at the close of day, not to open till sunrise, those who supped at his house were obliged to sleep there, or at the country houses that cover the borders of the lake.

“On our way, I asked him how, almost without territory, and without any facilities for commerce with foreign countries, Geneva had enriched herself. ‘By manufacturing watches,’ he replied, ‘by reading your gazettes, and profiting by your follies. These people know how to calculate the profits on your loans.’

“As we were talking of Geneva, he asked me what I thought of

Rousseau. I answered that in his writings he appeared to me only an eloquent sophist; and in his character only a false cynic, who would burst with pride and indignation if the world ceased to gaze upon him. As to the earnest desire he had conceived of giving a fair exterior to the part he acted, I knew the anecdote related by Diderot of the origin of his first Discourse, and repeated it to him.

“‘You do not astonish me,’ said Voltaire. ‘That man is factitious from head to foot; he is so in his mind and soul. But it is in vain for him to play now the stoic, and now the cynic; he will eternally belie himself, and his mask will stifle him.’”

“Among the inhabitants of Geneva whom I saw at his house, the only men who pleased, and who were pleased with, me were the Chevalier Hubert and Cramer the bookseller. They were both of easy converse, of a jovial temper, and had wit without affectation, — a rare thing in their city. Cramer, I am told, played tragedy tolerably well; he was the Orosmane of Madame Denis, and this talent had won him the friendship and the custom of Voltaire; that is to say, thousands of francs. Hubert had a talent less useful, but amusing, and very curious in its fertility. You would have said he had eyes at his fingers’ ends. With his hands behind his back, he would cut out a portrait in profile as like, and even more like, than he could draw with a pencil. He had Voltaire’s face so strongly impressed on his imagination that, absent or present, his scissors could represent him meditating, writing, in action, and in all attitudes. I have seen landscapes cut out by him in white paper, where the perspective was preserved with prodigious art. These two amiable neighbors were very assiduous in their visits to *Les Délices* during the little time I stayed there.

“M. de Voltaire insisted on showing us his country house at *Tourney*, where his theatre was, a quarter of a league from Geneva. This was the end of our ride in the afternoon, in his carriage. *Tourney* was a little neglected country-seat, but the view from it was admirable. In the valley was the Lake of Geneva, bordered by country houses, and terminated by two large cities; beyond and in the distance, a chain of mountains of thirty leagues extent, and that *Mont Blanc* loaded with eternal snows and ice that never melt. Such is the view that *Tourney* affords. There I saw the little theatre that tormented Rousseau, and where Voltaire consoled himself for no longer visiting the theatre of Paris, which nightly resounded his fame.

“The idea of this unjust and tyrannical privation filled me with grief and indignation. Perhaps he perceived it; for, more than once, by his reflections he answered my thoughts; and on the road, as we turned, he talked to me of Versailles, of the long residence that I had made there, and of the kindness that Madame de Pompadour had formerly expressed for him.

“‘She still loves you,’ said I; ‘she has repeated it often to me. But she is weak, and cannot, or dares not, effect all she wishes; for the unhappy woman is no longer loved, and perhaps she now envies the lot of Madame Denis, and would willingly be at Les Délices.’ ‘Let her come,’ said he, with transport, ‘and play tragedy with us. I will write characters for her and characters of queens. She is beautiful; she should know the play of the passions.’ ‘She knows, too,’ said I, ‘the torments of profound grief and bitter tears.’ ‘So much the better! That is just what we want!’ exclaimed he, as it were enchanted at having a new actress. And, in truth, you would have said that he thought he saw her arrive. ‘Since she suits you,’ said I, ‘leave the rest to me; if she can no longer succeed in the theatre of Versailles, I will tell her that yours awaits her.’

“This romantic fiction amused the company. They found some probability in it; and Madame Denis, indulging the delusion, entreated her uncle not to oblige her to yield her parts to the new actress. He retired to his closet for a few hours; and in the evening, at supper, kings and their mistresses being the subject of conversation, Voltaire, in comparing the spirit and gallantry of the old and new courts, displayed to us that rich memory which nothing interesting ever escaped. From Madame de la Vallière to Madame de Pompadour, the anecdotic history of the two reigns, and in the interval that of the regency, passed in review, with a rapidity and brilliancy of beauty and coloring that dazzled us. Yet he reproached himself with having stolen from M. de l’Ecluse moments which, he said, he would have occupied more agreeably to us. He begged him to indemnify us with a few scenes from the ‘Applewoman,’ and he laughed at them like a child.

“The next day (it was the last we were to pass together) he sent for me early in the morning, and, giving me a manuscript, ‘Go into my cabinet,’ said he, ‘and read that; you shall give me your opinion of it.’ It was the tragedy of ‘Tancrède,’ that he had just finished. I read it; and returning with my face bathed in tears, I told him he had written nothing more interesting. ‘To whom,’ asked he, ‘would you give the part of Aménaïde?’ ‘To Clairon,’ answered I, — ‘to the sublime Clairon; and I will answer for a success at least equal to that of “Zaïre.”’ ‘Your tears,’ replied he, ‘tell me most eloquently what I was most desirous of knowing; but the action, — did you find nothing that stopped you in its march?’ ‘I found that it wants only what you call criticism of the closet. The public will be too much moved to be occupied with that at the theatre.’ Fortunately, he said nothing of the style. I should have been obliged to conceal my sentiments; for, in my opinion, ‘Tancrède,’ in point of style, was very far from

being written like his best tragedies. In 'Rome Sauvée' and in 'L'Orphelin de la Chine' I had still found the beautiful versification of 'Zaïre,' of 'Mérope,' and of 'La Mort de César,' but in 'Tancrède' I thought I saw a decline in his style: weak, tedious verses, loaded with redundant words that disguise the want of force and vigor, — in a word, the age of the poet; for in him, as in Corneille, the poetry of style was the first that failed, and after 'Tancrède,' where the fire of genius still emitted some sparks, it was wholly extinguished.

"Afflicted at our departure, he would not steal from us one moment of this last day. The desire of seeing me received at the French Academy, the eulogy of my tales, which formed, he said, their most agreeable family reading, then my analysis of Rousseau's letter to D'Alembert on the stage, — a refutation which he thought unanswerable, and which he appeared to esteem very highly, — were, during our walk, the subjects of his conversation. I asked him whether Geneva had been deceived on the true motive of this letter of Rousseau. 'Rousseau,' said he, 'is better known at Geneva than at Paris. We are here the dupes neither of his false zeal nor of his false eloquence. It is against me that his darts are directed, and that is obvious to every one. Possessed of an unbounded pride, he would wish that in his native country no one should occupy any place in the public mind but himself. My residence here eclipses him; he envies me the air I breathe at this place; and, above all, he cannot suffer that, by amusing Geneva sometimes, I should steal moments that should be employed in thinking of him.'

"As we were to set off at the dawn of day, as soon as the gates of the city should be open and we could get horses, we resolved, in company with Madame Denis, M. Hubert, and M. Cramer, to prolong till that hour the pleasure of sitting up and conversing together. Voltaire *would* be of the party, and we pressed him in vain to retire to bed. More awake than ourselves, he read to us some cantos of 'Jeanne.' This reading had for me an inexpressible charm; for if Voltaire, in reciting heroic verse, affected, in my mind, an emphasis too monotonous, a cadence too strongly marked, no one read familiar and comic verse with so much natural delicacy and grace; his eyes and smile had an expression that I have never seen but in him. Alas! it was for me the song of the swan, and I was to see him again only as he expired.

"Our mutual adieus were tender even to tears, but much more so on my part than on his. That was natural, for, independently of my gratitude and all the motives I had for loving him, I left him in exile."¹

¹ 2 Memoirs of Marmontel (London, 1806), 291.

This is an interior view of Voltaire, as Marmontel retained it in his memory thirty years after. His lot was not so entirely Arcadian as it seemed to a guest. Probably on their ride to Tournay Voltaire told his young friend of his preliminary quarrel with the curé of the little parish, "the most execrable *chicaneur* of the province:" how the said curé had plotted to send the five families, who alone remained in Ferney, "straight to heaven by starving them to death;" depriving them of a poor-tithe which they had enjoyed for a century, and putting them to fifteen hundred francs of law expenses before they knew it. The lord of Ferney defended his peasants on this occasion with a fire and persistence all his own, but could only prevail, at last, by paying a considerable part of the claim against them.

Unfortunately, too, he became embroiled with the President de Brosses, the proprietor of Tournay, a scholar and apparently a gentleman. There is a volume of four hundred pages upon this affair; but it serves only to convert into a baffling enigma what could have been explained, perhaps, in twenty lines. The original cause of the imbroglio was two hundred and eighty-one francs' worth of fire-wood, which had been cut upon Tournay *either* before *or* after Voltaire's purchase. Voltaire claimed that the wood was his own, and refused to pay for it. De Brosses insisted the wood was his, and demanded payment of the man who had cut it. This was the seeming ground of the dispute; but it was involved in some way, and embittered by some course of action, not explained, pursued by the president in the affair with the curé. Letters upon letters passed between the poet and the president; but several of Voltaire's most material replies are wanting, and it is therefore an impossibility to ascertain which of the two was in the right. At length, De Brosses, tired out with the interminable dispute, made this proposition to a friend: —

"Listen: an idea comes into my head at this moment. It is the only solution creditably admissible for me, and all will be finished. Let Voltaire, in your presence, send the 281 livres to the curé of Tournay, or to Madame Gallatin,¹ to be distributed to the poor inhabitants of the parish. Then all will be said. On my part, I will give a re-

¹ A neighbor, grandmother of Albert Gallatin, secretary of the treasury of the United States from 1801.

ceipt for the 281 livres to Charles Baudy [wood-cutter], and thus the suit will be terminated to the profit of the poor."

This proposition appears to have been accepted, and there was a lull in the storm. Voltaire, however, conceived an extreme dislike of his proprietor, who, on his part, had no opinion of his tenant's ability as a manager of public business, and resented his interference in the affairs of the "land of Gex."

Before leaving Les Délices, he had a visitor of different quality from the amiable and sympathetic Marmontel: Casanova the Italian adventurer, the man of many talents and more vicissitudes; by turns prisoner and courtier, financier, poet, and man of intrigue, but always the positive, persistent, self-satisfied, irresistible Casanova. In 1760 he was in high vogue at Paris, and much employed by embarrassed ministers in negotiating loans and managing new kinds of lotteries of his own invention, which D'Alembert himself thought mathematically sound. He has left us an account of his visit to Les Délices, which has at least the merit of being interesting in a high degree. He called forth from Voltaire a repartee which may be styled, perhaps, the best of its kind yet recorded. On his way to Geneva, he paused in the adjacent canton of Bern to pay his homage to the eminent naturalist, Haller, then retired from Göttingen, and settled as chief magistrate of his native canton. During dinner, he asked Haller (who, he says, "did not wish his orthodoxy to be doubted") whether Voltaire often came to see him. Haller smiled, and replied by a happy quotation from Horace: "*Vetabo, qui Cereris sacrum vulgavit arcanum, sub iisdem sit trabibus.*"¹ On taking leave, three days after, Casanova ventured to say how much he rejoiced at the prospect of becoming acquainted with the great Voltaire; upon which the orthodox philosopher said, "Voltaire is a man whose acquaintance I have had reason to seek; but many persons, contrary to the physical laws, have found him greater when seen at a distance."

Casanova pursued his journey, and soon found himself at Voltaire's abode. He arrived on the day in 1760 when Mr. Fox, brother of the orator, reached the château.

¹ I will forbid him to be under this roof who discloses the secret rite of Ceres.

CASANOVA AT LES DÉLICES.

"I found Voltaire just rising from dinner, surrounded by ladies and gentlemen.

"At last [said I, on approaching him] the happiest moment of my life is arrived: I at length behold my great teacher. For the last twenty years, sir, I have attended your school."

V. 'Do me this honor twenty years longer, and then do not fail to bring me the money for your schooling.'

C. 'I promise; it shall not be withheld. But do you also promise that you will then expect me?'

V. 'I promise it, and would sooner die than break my promise.'

A general laugh gave loud applause to this first witty answer of Voltaire: this was a matter of course. The conversation turned soon upon poetry.

V. 'Which Italian poet do you prefer?'

C. 'Ariosto. I cannot, however, with propriety say that I *prefer* him. In my opinion he is the only poet, and yet I know them all. When I saw your censure on Ariosto, about fifteen years ago. I was persuaded you would retract your judgment when you had read his works.'

V. 'I thank you for believing I had not read Ariosto. I had read him, but I was young, and imperfectly acquainted with your language. At the same time I was influenced by those of the Italian literati who were admirers of Tasso. Thus I unfortunately suffered an opinion on Ariosto to go abroad which I considered as my own. It was not my own opinion. I admire your Ariosto.'

C. 'I now breathe again. Do, I beseech you, excommunicate the book in which you have ridiculed Ariosto.'

V. 'All my books are excommunicated already. But you shall witness in what manner I have retracted my judgment of Ariosto.'

Voltaire now astonished me. He recited by heart the two long passages of the thirty-fourth and thirty-fifth cantos of 'Orlando,' where the divine poet makes Astolfo converse with the Apostle John, without missing one verse, or in a single instance violating the rules of prosody. He afterwards extolled the beauties of the poet by such observations as became a truly great man: more sublime remarks could not have been expected even from an Italian commentator. I listened to him with the utmost attention, and watched, but in vain, to discover an error. Turning to the company, I declared that my admiration was boundless, and that it should be made known throughout Italy. Voltaire now said, 'The whole of Europe shall be informed by myself of the ample reparation which is due to the greatest genius she

ever produced.' He hardly knew how or when to put an end to his encomiums; and the next day he presented me with his own translation of a stanza.

"Though none of the company, except myself, understood the Italian language, yet Voltaire's recitation on the preceding day procured him the applause of all present. After these applauses had subsided, Madame Denis, his niece, asked me whether I considered the long passage recited by her uncle as one of the finest of that great poet. I replied, 'Certainly, madam, it is one of the finest, but not the finest.' She inquired farther, 'Has it been decided, then, which is the finest?' I replied, 'This was absolutely necessary; for, otherwise, the apotheosis of the poet could not have taken place.' 'He has been canonized, then?' continued she. 'I did not know that.' A general burst of laughter ensued, and all of them, Voltaire being foremost, declared themselves in favor of Madame Denis. I preserved the utmost gravity. Voltaire, seemingly offended, said, 'I know why you do not laugh. You mean to indicate that the part for which Ariosto has been called the divine must have been inspired.'

"C. 'Most certainly.'

"V. 'And which is the passage?'

"C. 'The last thirty-six stanzas of the twenty-third canto. They describe the madness of Orlando with so much truth that they may be called technically correct. No one, except Ariosto, ever knew how madness comes upon us. He alone has been able to describe it. You, too, have doubtless shuddered while reading those stanzas. They stir up all the sensibilities of the soul.'

"V. 'I remember them. All the frightfulness of love is there displayed; and I am impatient to read them again.'

"'Perhaps,' said Madame Denis, 'you will be so kind as to recite the passage,' at the same time turning herself to her uncle, as if to ask his consent.

"C. 'Why should I not, if you will have the goodness to listen to me?'

"MADAME D. 'What! Have you taken the trouble to commit it to memory?'

"C. 'From the age of fifteen I have read Ariosto twice or three times annually; he must therefore have necessarily impressed my memory without any effort on my part,—I might say, almost involuntarily. His genealogies and historical episodes, however, are an exception: they fatigue the mind, and leave the heart unaffected. Horace is the only author whom I have wholly committed to memory; yet he, too, has some verses, in his epistles, that are too prosaic.'

"V. 'I conceive it possible to learn Horace by heart; but to succeed with Ariosto is no trifle. There are forty-six long cantos.'

“C. ‘Say, rather, fifty-one.’

“Voltaire was silent, but Madame Denis immediately resumed, and said, —

“‘Quick, quick! Let us have the thirty-six stanzas of which you say that they excite horror, and which have obtained for the poet the appellation of divine.’

“I immediately recited them, avoiding the usual declamation of the Italians. Ariosto needs not the artificial aid of a declaimer, which, after all, produces monotony. I perfectly agree with the French that a singing delivery is intolerable. I repeated the stanzas just as if they had been prose, except as to tone, look, and change of voice. They perceived and felt the effort I made to repress my tears, without being able to suppress theirs. When I had finished the recital, the countenances of the company sufficiently expressed their approbation. Voltaire exclaimed, ‘I have always said, if you wish to make others weep, you must weep yourself. But to weep, one must feel; and to feel, one must have a soul.’ He then embraced me, and thanked me; he moreover promised to recite the same stanzas on the following day. He kept his word. We resumed our conversation about Ariosto, and Madame Denis expressed her surprise that the Roman pontiff had not included his works in the list of prohibited books. Voltaire told her the contrary had been done. Leo X. had excommunicated, by a particular bull, all those who should dare to condemn Ariosto. The two great houses of Este and Medici would not allow the poet to be injured.

“We now conversed on other subjects, all relating to literature; and at last his piece entitled ‘L’Ecoissaise,’ which had then been acted at Solothurn, became the topic of conversation. Voltaire remarked that if it would afford me any pleasure to personate a character at his house he would request Monsieur de Chavigny to prevail on his lady to play the part of Lindane, and he himself would act the part of Monrose. I politely thanked him for his kindness, but declined the proposition, adding that Madame de Chavigny was at Basil, and that I was obliged to continue my journey on the following day. Upon this, he raised a loud cry, and put the whole company in an uproar, alleging that my visit would be an insult to him, unless I remained with him at least a week. I told him I had come to Geneva expressly to see him, and having accomplished this I had nothing else to detain me here.

“V. ‘Have you come to speak with me, or do you wish that I should speak with you?’

“C. ‘I came here, above all things, for the sake of your conversation.’

“V. ‘You must then stay at least three days longer. Dine with me every day, and we will converse together.’

“I accepted the offer, but returned to my inn, having much writing to do.

“According to my promise, I went to dine with Voltaire on the following day, and met the Duke de Villars. He had just arrived at Geneva to consult the celebrated physician Tronchin, who had some years before saved his life. I said very little during dinner, but afterwards Voltaire entered into a conversation with me about the constitution of Venice; he knew that I was dissatisfied with the government; I nevertheless disappointed his expectations. I endeavored to convince him that no country in the world enjoyed greater liberty than Venice. Perceiving the subject was not agreeable to me, he took me aside, and went with me into his garden, of which he styled himself the creator. When we came to the extremity of a long avenue, close to a running water, ‘This,’ said he, ‘is the Rhone, which I send to France.’ He at the same time directed my attention to the beautiful prospect he had of Geneva and Mont Blanc. He afterwards began a conversation upon Italian literature, and evinced great ingenuity and much learning; but his conclusions were generally erroneous; I, however, allowed him to enjoy his opinion. He disagreed with me on Homer, Dante, and Petrarch. His judgment of the works of these great men is well known. He could not refrain from writing exactly as objects represented themselves to his own mind, and this has greatly injured him in the public opinion. I contented myself with merely replying that if these great men had not really deserved the admiration of all who had studied them they would not have acquired the high reputation which they still maintained.

“I accompanied Voltaire into his sleeping-room, where he changed his wig and the little cap he used to wear under it as a preservative against rheumatism. On his writing-table lay several Italian poets, and among other the ‘La Secchia Repita’ of Tassoni. ‘This,’ said he, ‘is the only tragi-comic poem Italy possesses. Tassoni was a monk, and united with learning a taste for the *belles-lettres*. As a poet he is not without genius.’ Voltaire now took me into a room and showed me a number of parcels, amounting perhaps to a hundred. ‘This,’ said he, ‘is my correspondence. You see here nearly fifty thousand letters, which I have answered.’

“C. ‘Do you keep copies of your answers?’

“V. ‘Of a great many of them. I keep an amanuensis for that purpose.’

“C. ‘I know booksellers who would give you a high price for these treasures.’

“ V. ‘ Be on your guard with the booksellers, should you ever publish a work ; but perhaps you have already published something ? ’

“ C. ‘ I will begin when I am older.’

“ We were now called to join the company, and two hours passed away in social conversation. The great poet shone, and entertained the whole circle. He was constantly applauded, although his satires were sometimes very severe. He always laughed at them himself, and most of the company joined him. It was impossible to keep a better house than Voltaire did. In fact, he was the only person who gave a good dinner. He was then sixty-six years of age, and had an annual income of 125,000 livres. Those who assert that he became rich by taking an unfair advantage over the booksellers are mistaken. The booksellers, on the contrary, acted unfairly towards him, except only the Cramers, whose fortune he made. He gave them his works as a present, and thus promoted their circulation.

“ We should have parted good friends, but I unfortunately quoted a passage of Horace, to say something flattering to Voltaire.

“ V. ‘ Horace was a great teacher of dramatic poetry. The rules which he has given us will never become obsolete.’

“ C. ‘ One of his rules you neglect, and only one, but you do it as becomes a great man.’

“ V. ‘ Which is it ? ’

“ C. ‘ You do not write *contentus paucis lectoribus*.’¹

“ V. ‘ If Horace had had to contend with superstition, he would, like myself, have written for the whole world.’

“ C. ‘ I believe you might spare yourself the trouble of this contest ; for you will never succeed in extirpating superstition. And if you were to succeed, pray, what would you substitute for it ? ’

“ V. ‘ I admire that : when I deliver the world from a monster which devours it, I am asked what I will put in its place ! ’

“ C. ‘ But superstition does not devour it. On the contrary, the world wants it.’

“ V. ‘ I love mankind ! I wish to see them as happy as myself, and free. But freedom and superstition can never agree. Where do you find that slavery renders a nation happy ? ’

“ C. ‘ Would you then see the people possessed of sovereignty ? ’

“ V. ‘ God forbid ! Only *one* must rule.’

“ C. ‘ Then superstition is necessary ; for without it the people will not obey the monarch.’

“ V. ‘ Let me hear nothing of monarchy. This word reminds me of despotism, which I hate as much as slavery.’

“ C. ‘ But what do you then desire ? If only one is to rule, I cannot view him in any other character than that of a monarch.’

¹ Content with few readers.

“V. ‘I would have him to rule over a free people, and then he will be their head, without our calling him monarch; for he could not then act arbitrarily.’

“C. ‘But Addison says that such a monarch, such a chief, cannot in reality be found. I adhere to the opinion of Hobbes. Of two evils we must choose the least. A people without superstition will become philosophers, and philosophers will not obey. To be happy, a people must be kept in subjection, in restraint, in chains.’

“V. ‘If you had read my writings, you would have seen that I have proved superstition to be the greatest enemy to kings.’

“C. ‘I have read and studied your writings repeatedly, and never more assiduously than when I differed from you in opinion. Your predominant passion is love for the human race. *Est ubi peccus.*¹ It makes you blind. Love mankind, but love them as they are. They are not susceptible of the benefit you intend for them. If they followed your advice, they would only become unhappy and wicked. Leave them, therefore, the monster that devours them. It is dear to them. I never laughed more than when I read that Don Quixote found himself in the greatest perplexity how he should defend himself against the galley-slaves, whom, out of generosity, he had liberated.’

“Voltaire, wishing to change the subject of our conversation, asked me whence I came.

“C. ‘From Roches. I should never have forgiven myself, had I left Switzerland without having seen the celebrated Haller. It has ever been a feast to me to pay my homage to the great geniuses of the age, and you have now furnished the seasoning.’

“V. ‘You must have been pleased with Monsieur de Haller.’

“C. ‘I spent three delightful days with him.’

“V. ‘I congratulate you. He is a man to whom we must bow.’

“C. ‘I think so, too. You render him justice. I lament that he did not exercise equal justice towards you.’

“V. ‘Ha! ha! ha! He thinks ill of me, and I think well of him. Very possibly we are both mistaken.’

“We all applauded this answer. Its chief value consisted in its promptness. We now concluded our conversation on literary subjects; and I remained silent as long as Voltaire continued with the company. I then paid my respects to Madame Denis, offering to execute any commissions she might have for Rome, and prepared for my departure, not without self-satisfaction at my last combat with this athletic champion; but also with some portion of chagrin, which, for ten years, made me a severe judge of all that I read, both old and new, from the pen of this great man.”

¹ Whence is your fault.

These are pleasing interviews, and present the circle of *Les Délices* in an attractive light. Voltaire conversed much with his erratic guest upon living and recent Italian authors, not agreeing with him on several of them. Casanova also touched upon "*La Pucelle*," without knowing what it was nor who had written it. He launched into warm commendation of Crébillon, one of whose tragedies he had translated into Italian verse, and favored Voltaire with the recital of a passage. He also derived the impression that Madame Denis excessively admired Frederic II., and it is probable, therefore, that the repulsion between host and guest was not all on one side. But, farewell, *Les Délices*! In 1765 Voltaire sold it, giving as a reason that he could no longer support the fatigue of receiving such crowds of visitors as the nearness of that villa to Geneva brought upon him. "I have thought, too," he wrote to Collini, "that, as I have only one body, I ought not to have two houses." But Ferney had already been his for some years. He was proud of his new abode, and, above all, he exulted in the lordly freedom of his tenure. "It is much," he wrote to his niece, Madame de Fontaine, "to be independent; but to have found the secret of being independent in France is more than to have written '*La Henriade*.'"

CHAPTER XXIV.

ÉCRASEZ L'INFÂME.

HE had now reached the goal of commonplace aspiration. He possessed in richest abundance what common men covet and rest in. He was grand seigneur, with "two leagues of land" about him, a park three miles in circuit, gardens, châteaux, vassals, a revenue of a hundred thousand francs, a parish church in which he was entitled to be prayed for, some good pictures, a heterogeneous library of five thousand volumes, and a fame the most intense and the widest spread that literature had ever given a man during his life-time. "What will he do with it?" Will he subside now into a benevolent and tranquil country gentleman, a little vain of his peaches? So far from it that he only entered upon the phase of his career which gives him universal importance about the time of his building Ferney. At sixty-five, he was yet to do the chief part of the work which will make him interesting to remote posterity.

The French words printed at the head of this chapter, *Écrasez l'Infâme*, may be translated, Crush the monster. At the period of his settlement at Ferney, he fell into the habit of ending his more familiar letters with those words, in imitation of the Roman Cato, who finished every speech by saying, "Such is my opinion; I also think that Carthage must be destroyed." At first he used the word *fantôme*, as when, in 1757, writing to D'Alembert, he concluded thus: "Courage; continue, you and your colleagues [in the Encyclopædia], to overthrow the hideous phantom, enemy of philosophy and persecutor of philosophers." A few days after, in writing to the same staunch friend and ally, he employed the word *colosse*. "To overthrow the colossus, only five or six philosophers who understand one another are necessary." Then he explained a little what he meant. "The object is not to hinder our lack-

eyes from going to mass or sermon; it is to rescue fathers of families from the tyranny of impostors, and to inspire the spirit of tolerance." Some days after, he again particularizes: "Fanatic papists, fanatic Calvinists, all are tarred with the same brush;" for whose frustration D'Alembert was again exhorted to labor.

As the fight grew hotter and the combatants more numerous, he settled upon *Écrasez l'Infâme* as the battle-cry of the faithful. He rang all the changes upon these words. Sometimes he used them in jest; often with passionate vehemence. Not unfrequently, in the haste of finishing his letter, he would abbreviate the words to *Écr. l'Inf.*, and sometimes he would repeat this abbreviation many times in the same letter. Occasionally he would write, in the only corner left, *É. l'I.* To show his way of using a phrase which has now become familiar and famous, I will give a few examples, taken from the endings of letters to such devoted friends of the cause as D'Alembert and Damilaville:—

"I want you to crush *l'infâme*; that is the main point. It is necessary to reduce it to the state in which it is in England; and you can succeed in this if you will. It is the greatest service that can be rendered to the human race."

"Attack, brothers, skillfully, all of you, *l'inf.* What interests me is the propagation of the faith, of truth, the progress of philosophy, and the abasement of *l'inf.*"

"The Jansenist and the Molinists are tearing one another, and uncovering their shameful wounds; it is necessary to crush one by the other, and make their ruin the steps to the throne of truth. I embrace tenderly the brethren in Lucretius, in Cicero, in Socrates, in Marcus Antoninus, in Julian, and in the communion of all our holy patriarchs."

"Engage all my brethren to pursue *l'inf.* with voice and pen, without giving it a moment's pause. Your impassioned brother, V."

"I am always interested in the success of the French drama, but much more in the brethren, and in the destruction of *l'inf.*, which must never be lost sight of. *Valete fratres.*"

"I end all my letters by saying: *Écr. l'inf.*, just as Cato always said, 'Such is my opinion, and Carthage must be destroyed.'"

"I embrace my brethren in Confucius, etc. Ah! *l'inf.!*"

"O my brethren, combat *l'inf.*, even to your last breath. Does the comic opera still sustain the glory of France! *Écr. l'inf.*"

"I embrace all the brethren. My health is pitiable. *Écr. l'inf.*"

"I embrace you tenderly, my dear brother. *Écr. l'inf.*, I tell you."

"I salute all the brethren. Nevertheless, *Écr. l'inf.*"

"How can you say that *l'inf.* had no part in the crime of that scoundrel [Damiens]? Read, then, his reply: 'It was religion that made me do what I have done.' This is what he said in his examination. I am only his clerk. My dear brother, I hate all tyranny."

"The older I grow, the more implacable enemy I become of *l'infâme*. Adieu. Shall I not see you before I die? *Écr. l'inf.*"

"My tender benediction to all the brethren. *Orate, fratres, et vigilate. Écr. l'inf.*"

"Drink to my health with brother Plato [Diderot], and *Écr. l'inf.*"

"*Vive felix!* and *écr. l'inf.* We will crush it; we will crush it."

"*Écr. l'inf.*, my dear brother, *écr. l'inf.*; and say to brother Protagoras [D'Alembert] *écr. l'inf.* in the morning, and *écr. l'inf.* in the evening."

"Oh, if the faithful had the warmth of your noble soul, how much good they would do! Oh, the lovely musical chimés that should end with *Écrasez l'infâme!*" [To Damilaville in 1765.]

A very long list of similar utterances could be given, but these will suffice. What, then, was that Infamous Thing, which he was so passionately desirous of crushing? And why this access of zeal, in the decline of his life, when he was panoplied about from dangerous attack by a splendor of reputation and princely opulence never before enjoyed, still less won, by a poet? This question is one which demands an explicit answer. The *Infâme* of Voltaire was not religion, nor the Christian religion, nor the Roman Catholic church. It was *religion claiming supernatural authority, and enforcing that claim by pains and penalties.* That is the fairest answer to the question, taking his whole life into view. The access of zeal which he experienced at the time now under consideration was due to particular causes. Thirty years before, as the reader may remember, when Héault said to him, "You will not destroy the Christian religion," he replied, "We shall see." It is Voltaire himself who preserves this anecdote.¹ But who was Héault, and what had he to do with it? Héault was lieutenant-general of the French *police*, through whom French priests put people into dungeons, broke them on the wheel, and burnt them at the stake.

The *Infâme* which Voltaire had in his mind when he wrote

¹ Voltaire to D'Alembert, June 20, 1760.

Écr. l'inf., mon cher frère, écr. l'inf., et dites à frère Protagoras, écr. l'inf. le matin, et écr. l'inf. le soir, was religion claiming supernatural authority, and employing to enforce the claim the power and resources of a government. It was the most ancient and powerful of all alliances, that of the Medicine-Man and the Chief, with modern means and appliances to assist both. It was religion with the Bastille and the rack at its command. It was religion owning two acres of every five in France (usually, the best two), and able to expel from the other three the noblest Frenchmen who called in question its tenets. It was religion smoothing the upward path to servile mediocrity, and making it impracticable to honest merit. It was religion which could put an ugly tall pot upon the head of a clown, a crooked stick in his hand, cover him all over with tawdry raiment, endow him with an imposing title and a prince's revenue, and then sit him down, squat like a toad, upon the intellect of France. It was religion making an Ass of Mirepoix the censor of a Newton in Newton's own subjects. It was religion keeping an ear always open to receive from women secrets not told to parent or husband. It was religion the mania of the weak, the cloak of the false, the weapon of the cruel. It was religion killing religion, and making virtue itself contemptible by resting its claim on grounds untenable and ridiculous. It was religion wielding the whole mass of ignorance, indolence, and cowardice, and placing it solid and entire in the only path by which the human race could advance. It was the worst thing that ever was in the world. It was L'INFÂME!

Voltaire was mistaken in supposing that *l'Infâme* had no existence in Protestant England. If we look into the early lives of British men noted for their hostility to it, such as Hume, Gibbon, Shelley, Dickens, and Hood, we usually find that they suffered from it acutely in childhood or youth, as Voltaire doubtless did from the craven austerity of his elder brother, Armand, as well as from his early acquaintance with M. Héroult. The case of Thomas Hood is one in point. The most careless reader of his works must have observed that he loathed the British form of *l'Infâme* with something like Voltaire's sustained intensity, and never lost a chance to give it a lunge with his rapier. At the end of one of his later let-

ters we have the secret. An awful widow having long pestered him with her insolent tracts and impious admonitions, he at length turned upon her, and wrote her a letter, — his Tract, as he styled it, — in which, perhaps, he used language somewhat too violent. He seems to have thought so himself, and concluded his performance with an apology : —

“ And now, madam, farewell. Your mode of recalling yourself to my memory reminds me that your fanatical mother insulted mine in the last days of her life (which was marked by every Christian virtue) by the presentation of a Tract addressed to Infidels. I remember also that the same heartless woman intruded herself, with less reverence than a Mohawk squaw would have exhibited, on the chamber of death, and interrupted with her jargon almost my very last interview with my dying parent. Such reminiscences warrant some severity ; but if more be wanting, know that my poor sister has been excited by a circle of Canters like yourself into a religious frenzy, and is at this moment in a private mad-house.”¹

It was *this spirit* — give it what name you will — that Voltaire abhorred with a detestation so intense. In France, in his day, that spirit had blank *lettres de cachet* in its secret portfolio, and the French police to serve them. Let me remark, also, that, like Hood, he set limits to his dissent, and adhered to his belief in a superintending deity. Some of his ablest and best allies were atheists. He had a short and easy way with them. “ Gentlemen,” he would say, taking out his watch, “ the watch proves a watchmaker.” Baron de Gleichen, who visited him in 1757, relates that a young author, at his wits’ end for the means of living, knocked one day at the poet’s door, and to recommend himself said, “ I am an apprentice atheist [*garçon athée*], at your service.” Voltaire replied, “ I have the honor to be a master deist ; but, although our trades are opposed, I will give you some supper to-night and some work to-morrow. I wish to avail myself of your arms, and not of your head.”²

He evidently felt at times the staggering difficulty of reconciling obvious facts — as, for example, the existence of so much innocent and profitless suffering in the world — with the

¹ 2 Memorials of Thomas Hood, by his Son, 109. Boston, 1860.

² Souvenirs, page 213.

simple theory of the universe that has come down to us from the childhood of our race. But any other theory then current seemed to him still less tenable; and he thought the idea of a Supreme Being "necessary" both to philosophy and to morals. Atheism, however, he deemed a slight and curable malady, compared with that unutterable thing which caused the massacres of St. Bartholomew, and kept France in a bloody broil for a century.

"The atheist [he once wrote] is a monster that will devour only to appease his hunger. Superstition is another monster, which will rend men for conscience' sake. I have always remarked that an atheist can be cured; but you can never cure radically the superstitious man. The atheist is a man of understanding, who is mistaken, but who thinks for himself; the superstitious man is brutally stupid, who has never had any ideas of his own. The atheist will violate Iphigenia about to espouse Achilles; but the fanatic will piously slay her upon the altar, and believe that Jupiter will be much indebted to him for the act. The atheist will steal a golden vessel from a church, in order to give a supper to his loose companions; but the fanatic will celebrate an *auto-da-fé* in that church, and sing a Jewish canticle with full throat while burning Jews at the stake. Yes, my friends, atheism and fanaticism are the two poles of a universe of confusion and horror. The narrow zone of virtue is between those two poles. March with a firm step in that path; believe in a good God, and be good."¹

Such remained his conviction as long as he lived. Without ever being in the least "devout," he had the feeling always which he once expressed so neatly: "If there were no God, it would be necessary to invent him."

¹ Histoire de Jeuni, 1769, chapter xi. 60 Œuvres de Voltaire, 320. 97-volume edition.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE PROVOCATION.

IT remains now to indicate, with all possible brevity, the events which inflamed anew the zeal of Voltaire against *l'Infâme* and caused him to reconsecrate his life to a systematic endeavor to crush it.

Let us remember that he had been much employed, during his residence in Switzerland, in a rapid review and reconstruction of his sketch of Universal History ("Essai sur les Mœurs"). Rapid reviews of history are misleading, for, as a rule, it is the exceptional, and that alone, which history records: crimes, catastrophes, wars, epidemics, the downfall of kings and dynasties, the collapse of empires, revolutions, the fierce collision of old and new; in a word, whatever is so extraordinary as to be often related and long remembered. Nor has the literary art yet devised a mode of keeping the swift reader in mind of the slow, slow lapse of time. We read a history of the Thirty Years' War in thirty hours; and the more the historian has "grouped" and condensed, the more excellent we are inclined to regard him. But effective grouping deceives by making the reader insensible of the intervals of time and the wide extent of space. Reading a rapid, striking history of the religious wars is something like spending an afternoon upon Blackwell's Island, where the mad, the sick, the destitute, and the criminal of a great city are massed so effectively that a stupendous sum of anguish and depravity can be viewed in two hours. The obliging Macaulay who accompanies the visitor does not keep dinning in his ears that for every one of those unhappy persons there are a hundred on the next island who are well, solvent, sane, and virtuous.

Studying religion in the library, Voltaire found it a bloody and a hideous thing; its history only to be fitly told in sobs and shrieks. It was the miserable history of half-developed

man. He was not in jest when he used to say that he always had an access of fever on St. Bartholomew's day. Moreover, he read of all those horrors with a modernized mind; or, in other words, with a sense of the absurd futility of religious controversy, in which he saw infuriate men contesting points respecting which certainty was impossible. Such impressions as these were most fresh and vivid upon his mind in 1758, when he read the last proofs of the sixth volume of his "Essai sur les Mœurs," in which religion rarely appears or fairly could appear except as the scourge and opprobrium of our imperfect race.

Then it was that the ecclesiastical powers, warmly encouraged by the queen and her children, and actively supported by the king, seemed about to overwhelm and crush the intellect and science of France. It was Boyer of Mirepoix, not Voltaire, who began this business of "crushing;" and Boyer must, for the time, have accomplished his purpose but for the genius, audacity, and tact of Voltaire, who began crushing on his own account.

Jean-François Boyer, among the least meritorious churchmen of his generation, a dull man, unknown as preacher or theologian, kept his country in a broil for fourteen years, his influence being wholly due to the favor of the royal family, who assigned to him the bestowal of the church's fat things. It was he who gave rich abbeys and nominated bishops; through him alone was fortune or rank to be won in the church. He used his power with unswerving purpose to crush opposition to the Bull Unigenitus, and to enforce the supremacy of the church over the human mind. Like most of the extremely mischievous men, he was strictly moral, and seems to have coveted nothing for himself but power. Probably, too, he was "ass" enough to believe in the system of fictions of which himself was part. Sincere, moral, disinterested, obstinate, and without intelligence, he was just the man to push a despotism far on toward its destruction, and this he did.

His first important act, his masterpiece of insolence and folly, was his attempt to make the acceptance of the Sacred Bull a condition of absolution to dying penitents. No absolution, no sacraments; no sacraments, no burial in consecrated ground! He chose Paris as the scene of this experi-

ment. Having appointed Beaumont Archbishop of Paris, he induced him to require his parish priests to withhold the last sacraments from Jansenists who refused to accept the Bull as an article of faith. This was going far, and it confirms the suspicion, generally entertained at the time, of his sincere and strong belief in the necessity of the rite. It is only blind and bigoted sincerity that dares such inhuman folly. In hypocrisy there is an ingredient of intellect, small indeed, but usually sufficient to prevent persistence in a policy quite ruinous.

One instance will serve to show the exquisite working of this new rule. In June, 1749 (the year in which Voltaire was set free by Madame du Châtelet's death), died at Paris Charles Coffin, poet, famous scholar, illustrious school-master, venerated Jansenist, aged seventy-two. In early life, among other genial poems, he had written an ode to champagne, which some grateful producers recompensed by an annual gift of the wine to the end of his days. Afterward, he composed Latin hymns, several of which were printed in the authorized prayer-books. Advanced by Rollin to the mastership of the College of Beauvais in Paris, he raised that institution to the highest point of celebrity, and gained by it a private fortune of four hundred thousand francs. But, in common with a majority of the educated religious Frenchmen of his generation, he could not accept the Bull *Unigenitus*, and thus had failed to acquire a *billet de confession*, as it was termed, — a certificate that he was sound upon the Bull, signed by the curé of the parish. In his last sickness, Father Carme, his confessor for thirty years, a good, timid old man, past eighty, was unwilling to confess him, because he could not give him absolution and administer the last rites without falling under the censure of his superiors. The curé of the parish refused also. The afflicted family appealed to the magistracy, who, in turn, referred them to the archbishop, who sustained the priests. While the archbishop was considering the matter, the principal of the College of Beauvais died without the sacraments, — he whose hymns were in the breviary and were daily chanted in the churches, whose pupils adorned high places of the liberal professions all over France, who was held in veneration by the Jansenists and honored by men of the world as poet and scholar. Where was he to be buried? His remains were

“presented” at the church of his own parish. The curé, a “good Molinist,” refused to perform the service. The same evening, the body, in the presence of four thousand persons, many of whom had been his pupils, was conveyed to the chapel of the college, Saint-Jean-de-Beauvais, where it was entombed with extraordinary solemnity.¹

Such events as these have consequences. The person chiefly instrumental in arranging and compelling this honorable burial was the nephew of M. Coffin, a distinguished lawyer of Paris. Six months after, he also died. Then, “the good Molinist” of a curé, whom he had frustrated, had his revenge in refusing him also the last consolations of the church of which he was a devoted member. This new mode of holy warfare, this heartless contest over the pillows of dying saints, struck the lightest minds. It alarmed thoughtful citizens as a breach in the social system that made the French people one family. It led directly and immediately to that long, last struggle between the king and the parliament of Paris, which constitutes the chief part of the preliminary history of the French Revolution.

The parliament of Paris—the collective magistracy and supreme court of the city—was a slight check upon the absolutism of the king; the more precious because it was the only one. An edict imposing a tax was not law until the parliament had formally registered it; and though the king, by coming in person to the parliament, could command it to register an edict, and compel obedience to the command, yet this was an extreme measure, and not resorted to unless the case was urgent. This parliament, strongly Jansenist in its convictions, dared on this occasion to arrest the Molinist curé, to impose a fine upon him, and even to detain him a few hours a prisoner. It also sent to the king a remonstrance against these proceedings of the archbishop, which spoke the feelings of the French people; but the king allowed a whole year to pass without giving an answer. This king, dull in all else, had the instinct of his order considerably developed: he vaguely felt that his position in the *régime* was a kindred fiction to that of the archbishop, and that neither could long survive the other. He lent, therefore, the authority and prestige of his office to all the besotted follies of Boyer and Beaumont.

¹ 4 Journal de Barbier, 373.

These men showed a perverse tact in selecting the kind of victims who were surest to excite the ardent sympathies of the people. For example, the archbishop, soon after, dismissed two ladies of Jansenist opinions from their offices in the great hospital of Paris. One was the matron, and the other the stewardess. It belonged to the archbishop to appoint all the officers of the hospital whose functions were of a spiritual nature, and he claimed that these ladies were subject to his authority because they sometimes heard the younger patients say their catechism. They were known to be Jansenists, and the archbishop abruptly deprived them of their places. All Paris was indignant; the contributions to the hospital fell off; the inmates suffered. Attention being thus strongly directed to the hospital, its affairs were found to be abominably administered; so large a part of its revenues were absorbed in pensions and allowances to persons not connected with it that to the pauper patients the hospital was only a swifter and surer death. The parliament of Paris took up the cause of these estimable ladies, claiming that their offices were purely secular. The king's council declared them spiritual, and therefore subject to the archbishop. Whereupon, the parliament refused to register the royal declaration, and ceased to administer justice; the lawyers closed their offices; and while every branch of the government was in this broil, so trivial and so atrocious, poor invalids died for want of help.

Extreme unction was soon after refused to the Abbé le Maire, a venerable priest, known of old as a leader of the Jansenists. The parliament remained in session till midnight, discussing this new outrage; they condemned the Molinist curé, "ordered" the archbishop to put a stop to such scandals, and dispatched their solicitor-general to entreat him to administer the sacraments to the dying abbé. The prelate allowed him to die without the last rites, and hurried out to Versailles to complain to the king that the parliament was laying its hands upon holy things.

There was another violent rupture between the king and the parliament. The king ordered the proceedings against the curé to be canceled; whereupon the parliament issued an order for his arrest, and sent officers in quest of him. The curé escaped, and the king annulled the order for his arrest. Some of the

wisest and most eminent members of the parliament went to the king, and remonstrated with him with warmth and eloquence, dwelling especially upon the obvious fact that the shame of these occurrences fell finally upon religion itself. The king replied vaguely and coldly. The next day the parliament, receiving no satisfaction from the government, issued a solemn ordinance, in which it engaged not to cease its endeavors to repress such scandals; declaring that the Bull Unigenitus was not an article of faith, and ought not to come between an accused person and the administration of justice. More than ten thousand copies of this ordinance were instantly sold in Paris, and the word passed everywhere, "*This is my billet de confession!*"¹

The mania of refusing the sacraments to dying Jansenists could not fail to spread into the provinces, because Boyer had the bestowal of everything which ambitious ecclesiastics coveted. At such a time, especially in France, the air is filled with exasperating anecdotes. A priest of the diocese of Langres, while publicly giving the communion to two girls accused of Jansenism, said to them, "I give you the communion as Jesus gave it to Judas." The young women entered complaint against him, and the local parliament condemned him to apologize, and to pay to each of the two communicants a marriage portion of fifteen hundred francs. Everywhere there was the most menacing divergence between the parliaments and the bishops; the king always, in the last resort, siding with the ecclesiastics, who thus invoked the destruction both of their order and of his.

If ever men could be truly said to "sap the foundations of throne and altar," it was Boyer and the Archbishop of Paris. Nothing could recall them to reason. From 1749, the contention grew every year more heated and irreconcilable, until, in December, 1756, the king, in a solemn bed of justice, held at Versailles, attended by the peers and dignitaries of his kingdom, conceded to the ecclesiastics nearly everything they claimed, limited the ancient prerogatives of the parliaments, and forbade them to cease administering justice, "under penalty of disobedience." One hundred and eighty members resigned their judicial offices. Everything betokened confusion, when

¹ Histoire du Parlement de Paris, par Voltaire, chapter lxxv.

the penknife of Damiens, in a day, restored the royal prestige, and enabled the king to end his days an absolute monarch. "After us the deluge," said Madame de Pompadour; and the king made the same remark, with less point. The disasters of the Seven Years' War quickly followed, forcing the public mind into other channels; and thus these menacing questions, as to the rights of man, the rights of conscience, and the general ownership of France, were postponed for thirty-two years.

Nothing allayed the unteachable zeal of the ecclesiastics; their policy and their temper remained unchanged. Boyer died in 1755; but, during the whole of his tenure of power, he had appointed bishops and archbishops of his own kind; and hence the strife between the intellect of France and its enemies continued.

From the first, Boyer and such as he had viewed the Encyclopædia, conducted by Diderot and D'Alembert, with natural aversion. This work was an honest and patriotic scheme to make the knowledge possessed by the few accessible to the many. The plan of the editors was the same as that now pursued in the execution of similar works among ourselves: each subject was assigned to be treated by the person or persons best acquainted with it; and was to be handled with as near an approach to freedom as the censors would permit. Rousseau wrote upon music; D'Alembert upon mathematics and the sciences dependent; Marmontel upon literary subjects; Haller upon physiology; Holback upon chemistry; Turgot upon subjects appertaining to political economy. Montesquieu left an unfinished article for it; Condorcet was a contributor; Buffon gave it assistance. Diderot frequented workshops, bazaars, the quays, counting-rooms, vineyards, farms, factories, laying under contribution the practical men, who had rare and precious knowledge, which they could put into iron and fabrics, and make France rich, attractive, and comfortable with it, but could not arrange clearly upon paper. It was altogether a noble design, to which the best mind, heart, and taste of France warmly rallied, and from which no class had anything to fear, unless it throve upon the credulity and degradation of the human mind.

It had no warmer friend in France than Voltaire, who, from the day of its announcement in 1750, had not ceased to labor

for it with patriotic enthusiasm and disinterestedness. What could he personally gain from anonymous articles in such a work? He not only wrote for it, but gave valuable hints and suggestions to the editors, as well as much sound advice. He cautioned them, for example, in several amusing letters, not to be biased in their judgments by patriotic feeling. "Why," he asks D'Alembert, "do you say that the sciences are more indebted to France than to any other nation? Is it to the French that we are indebted for the quadrant, the fire-engine, the theory of light, inoculation, the seed-sower? *Parbleu*, you are jesting! We have invented only the wheelbarrow."

He was still in Prussia when the first volume appeared; and it was in Prussia that he heard of the danger which threatened the enterprise, even in its infancy. A young Frenchman arrived in Berlin in 1752, a fugitive from Paris, the Abbé de Prades, bearing a letter of introduction to him from D'Alembert. This abbé told his story: how he had passed his theological examination triumphantly at the Sorbonne, his thesis being unanimously approved by the hundred doctors of that ancient institution, which was to orthodox theology what the French Academy was to polite literature; how, after this honorable unanimous admission to the Sorbonne, he had accepted an invitation from Diderot to write some of the theological articles for the Encyclopædia; how this deeply offended the Jesuit authors of the "Dictionnaire de Trévoux," which the new work "effaced" in public estimation; how the Jesuit fathers, who had expected to contribute the theological articles, had risen upon this young doctor, stirred up all the powers against him, and even induced the Sorbonne itself to reverse its approval of his thesis; how the Anc. Bishop of Mirepoix, deaf to justice and to policy, had menaced him with a *lettre de cachet*, in terror of which he had fled to Berlin, a ruined man, a fugitive, not from his country only, but from his career, begun with high hopes and most auspicious promise.

To all of which, related in ample detail, Voltaire listened with indignant, sympathizing mind. The King of Prussia being absent at the time, he gave the abbé generous entertainment, and, on Frederic's return, procured for him the place of reader to the king, lately vacated by the worthy Darget.

Voltaire published the story in 1752, in a pamphlet, under

the title of "Le Tombeau de la Sorbonne," an astounding record of what educated men will do when folly and hypocrisy are the price of great offices and rich revenues. From this pamphlet we learn that it cost the Sorbonne throes of anguish to censure what it had, a short time before, unanimously approved. Forty of the doctors sided with the Abbé de Prades, and refused to give themselves the lie. At one wild session two of them came to blows. "You are a liar!" cried one. The learned theologian who was thus addressed rushed toward the speaker, pressed through a crowd of reverend fathers, and got in some good blows before he could be torn away.

One touch in the "Tombeau de la Sorbonne" remains a by-word to this day: "The doctors, ashamed of this scene, regained their calm. Silence was restored; the debate proceeded with more moderation. At length, the voting began. The curé of Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois arrives, and forces his way through the throng. 'Gentlemen,' he cries, 'I have business! I come only to cast my vote. *I am of the opinion of Tamponnet.*' Having thus spoken, he withdrew, and the assembly, who just before were ready to fight, roared with laughter."

Soon after the abbé was established at Berlin came tidings that the first two volumes of the Encyclopædia were suppressed by a decree of the king in council. As this decree did not forbid the continuance of the work, the editors, after some delay, resumed their labors; nor was the decree of suppression enforced. Every year a new volume appeared, and was gladly received by the subscribers, although nearly every article was marred in some degree by the hand or the fears of timid censors. Beginning with two thousand subscribers, the publishers sold nearly four thousand of the seventh volume, and the influence of the work was visibly extending. To understand what the Encyclopædia was to the French people of that generation, the reader has but to lay open before him, in some public library, a Bayle of 1736, a "Dictionnaire de Trévoux," and the early volumes of the Encyclopædia. The superiority of the new work was manifest and immense; it would have been greater but for the dread of interference and suspension that hung over the minds of the conductors.

The ridiculous penknife of crazy Damiens enabled the hostile priests, in the spring of 1757, to procure a royal edict that

threatened with *death* the authors, publishers, and sellers of books of which Molinist bishops disapproved: —

“WHEREAS, the ceaseless attention which the king is bound to exercise in maintaining the order and tranquillity of the public, and in repressing whatever could disturb it, does not permit him to suffer the unbridled license of the writings which are spread throughout the kingdom, and which tend to attack religion, excite the minds of the people, and impair his authority; and as the kings, his predecessors, have at different times opposed the severity of the laws to similar evil, THEREFORE, all persons who shall be convicted of having composed and printed writings tending to attack religion, to excite the minds of the people, to impair the royal authority, and disturb the order and tranquillity of the state shall be punished with death, as well as the printers, colporteurs, and others who shall have spread them abroad.”

The same edict assigned the penalty of the galleys to whomsoever published writings without legal permit, and forbade, under penalty of six thousand francs fine, the printing of anything whatever in a private house or monastery.¹

This decree, which was published a few days after the execution of Damiens, was regarded as one of the panic measures of the moment. Nevertheless, within six months, advocate Barbier recorded in his diary some terrible sentences under it: La Martelière, verse writer, for printing clandestinely Voltaire's “Pucelle” and other “such” works, nine years in the galleys; eight printers and binders, employed in the same printing-office, to the pillory and three years' banishment; the Abbé de Capmartin, for composing works “calculated to disturb the tranquillity of the state,” nine years in the galleys, branding on the shoulder, and degradation from his ecclesiastical rank.

The same chronicler, however, informs us that romances and “curious books,” as he calls them, such as Montesquieu's “Spirit of the Laws,” Mirabeau's “Ami des Hommes,” documents and pamphlets relating to the king's contest with the parliament, “La Pucelle,” and, in a word, whatever books the public mind eagerly craved, were sold everywhere with scarcely the pretense of secrecy, and made many booksellers

¹ 6 Journal de Barbier, 522, April, 1757.

rich. There were seventy-three periodicals then published in Paris, and there was an intellectual movement of such activity and vehemence that it was not possible to suppress it.

At such times, it is the best books that the censor can most easily and safely obstruct; it was therefore the authors of the *Encyclopædia* who were the worst sufferers from the new courage of the hierarchy. France was faring ill in the war; she was losing Canada, losing India, losing ships, losing prestige, losing confidence and hope. We find, everywhere and always, that whatever depresses man exalts and exaggerates the priest. In Peru and Mexico the priest has everything and is everything. "I draw a kind of glory," wrote Frederic to Voltaire, in remarking upon the burning of good books in Paris by the hangman, "that the epoch of the war which France wages against me becomes that of the war waged at Paris against good sense." These two wars, indeed, bore to one another the relation of cause and effect. The war with Frederic and England, which depressed and impoverished Frenchmen, gave French bishops an access of courageous insolence which first drove the editors of the *Encyclopædia* to despair, and then put a sudden stop to their labors. Sensitive D'Alembert, never a robust man, was the first to give up. He wrote to Voltaire, January 11, 1758:—

"I know not if the *Encyclopædia* will be continued. What is certain is, it will not be continued by me. I have notified M. de Malesherbes [minister] and the publishers that they must seek my successor. I am worn out with the affronts and vexations of every kind which this work draws upon us. The odious and even infamous satires which are published against it, and which are not only tolerated, but protected, authorized, applauded, nay, commanded, by those who have authority in their hands, . . . all these reasons, joined to several others, oblige me to renounce forever that accursed work."

Voltaire replied, in a letter noteworthy on many accounts, January 19, 1758:—

"I have sent you 'Hémistiche' and 'Heureux,' which you asked me to write. 'Hémistiche' is not a very brilliant commission. Nevertheless, by decorating it a little, I have, perhaps, written an article useful for men of letters and amateurs.¹ Nothing is to be disdained;

¹ See this article, *Hémistiche*, in the *Philosophical Dictionary*,—an agreeable piece of half a dozen pages, such as an editor must have been delighted to get.

and I will do the word Comma, if you wish it. I say to you again, I shall always add with great pleasure some grains of sand to your pyramid; but do not, then, abandon it; do not do what your ridiculous enemies wish; do not, then, give them that impertinent triumph. For forty years I have carried on the wretched trade of man of letters, and for forty years I have been overwhelmed with enemies. I could make a library of the abuse which has been vomited against me, and the calumnies which have been poured out with lavish hand. I was alone, without a single partisan, without any support, and delivered over to the beasts, like an early Christian. It was thus that I passed my life at Paris. You are assuredly not in that cruel and humiliating situation, which was the only recompense of my labors. You are a member of two academies, pensioned by the king [of Prussia]. This grand work of the Encyclopædia, in which the nation ought to be interested, is yours in common with a dozen superior men, who ought to make common cause with you. Why do you not address yourselves in a body to M. de Malesherbes? Why do you not prescribe the conditions on which you will continue? There is need of your work; it has become necessary. . . . Bestir yourselves, and you will be the masters. I talk to you like a republican; but, also, the matter concerns the republic of letters. Oh, poor republic!"

To this letter the too susceptible D'Alembert replied at much length, in a strain of mingled pathos and indignation. "I doubt," he concluded, "if your article upon History¹ can pass with the new censors. But nothing presses; I doubt if the eighth volume is ever printed. Think of the crowd of articles which it is now impossible to write: Heresy, Hierarchy, Indulgence, Infallibility, Immortality, Immaterial, Hebrews, Hobbism, Jesus Christ, Jesuits, Inquisition, Jansenists, Intolerance, and so many others. Again I say, we must stop where we are."

The editor may naturally enough have doubted whether the article upon History would pass. The first page contained a Voltairean definition of Sacred History, which a French censor of that time would have first enjoyed, and then erased: "Sacred History is a series of operations, divine and miraculous, by which it pleased God formerly to conduct the Jewish nation, and to-day to exercise our faith."

D'Alembert withdrew, and Diderot struggled on alone. The seventh volume had just been issued, the eighth was in course

* ¹ See the article in the Philosophical Dictionary.

of preparation, when, in the spring of 1758, appeared the work of Helvetius upon the human mind, "De l'Esprit," — two volumes of harmless, entertaining speculation upon man and his motives, as they presented themselves to a rich, handsome, and popular man of the world. The book was unconventional; it contained Helvetius's genuine thoughts; and hence it was interesting, and not altogether without value, as any intelligent man's book will be, if he succeeds in following Dr. Johnson's advice, and clears his mind of cant. It seemed to this opulent and fortunate farmer-general that "physical susceptibility and memory produce all our ideas, and that all our false judgments are the effect either of our passions or of our ignorance." It was also his opinion that utility is the test of merit, and that our sense of utility determines our moral judgments. Thus, in France, where precious and portable property was everywhere exposed to view, stealing was a crime; but in Sparta, where there was nothing but chickens and vegetables to appropriate, and where vigilance and address were the price of independence, stealing was a virtuous act; getting found out was the crime.¹ There were many other amusing paradoxes, calculated to provoke thought, suggest agreeable conversation, and lead on toward better methods of investigation.

The moral of the whole was this: The chief duty of each generation being to educate the next, all is good that promotes and facilitates that supreme, never-ending task; all is bad that hinders it.

This brave book had a fortune resembling that of the thesis of the Abbé de Prades. The worthy Tercier, chief clerk in the department of foreign affairs, to whom the manuscript was submitted for examination, reported, "I have found nothing in it which, in my judgment, ought to prevent its publication." The work was accordingly printed, "with privilege," and the author sent copies to the queen and her court, he being her *maitre d'hôtel* and *protégé*. The public leaped at it. The second edition was quickly called for; all the world decried and devoured it. The pious, limited Dauphin was seen rushing toward his mother's apartments, with the volumes in his hand, saying, "I am going to the queen to show her the

¹ De l'Esprit, volume i., chapter xiii.

fine things which her *maitre d'hôtel* has printed!" Perhaps he showed her the place where the sustained power and elegance of the "illustrious" Voltaire are extolled; perhaps he ran a wrathful finger down the page in which the persecution of philosophers by fanatic devotees is descanted upon, or pointed to the top of the next page, where the inquisitors who condemned Galileo are frankly styled "imbeciles." It is more probable that the young heir to the throne showed her the paragraph in which the English are censured for styling Charles I. a martyr. Very probably he directed her attention to the place where it is said that republics foster virtue better than monarchies: a cooper with mind, in a republic, might turn out a Themistocles, a Marius; "at Paris you will make a Cartouche of him!"

It was enough. Poor Tercier, who had seen no harm in a chatty, rash, good-tempered book like this, was turned out of his two offices, worth to him twenty thousand francs a year. The royal privilege was revoked, but not before two editions were published *cum privilegio*. The book was suppressed, and, along with eight others, one of which was Voltaire's "Loi Naturelle," it was publicly burned by the hangman, with all the usual ceremonies. Helvetius's book pleased scarcely any one; its audacities were not flattering to human nature; and the lightness of its tone offended many. Voltaire regretted its appearance almost as much as he wondered at the excitement it created. "What a fuss about an omelet!" he cried. Others blamed the author for "blabbing everybody's secret." Emboldened by this uproar of censure, of which the whole body of "philosophers" had their share, the government, in March, 1759, by royal decree, canceled the privilege which had been enjoyed by the Encyclopædia since 1746. The sale of the seven volumes was prohibited, and the further issue of the work forbidden. This decree, it is true, was not executed to the letter, but only in the spirit. The volumes continued to appear, but they were emasculated and disfigured; furnishing annual proof that the weakest governments are mighty to prevent good.¹

It so chanced that, at the time of the public burning of the

¹ See for full details of this melancholy history "Diderot," by John Morley, chapter v.

nine books in Paris and the suspension of the Encyclopædia, there was displayed on every bookseller's counter in the city the Abbé de Caveirac's new work of edification, entitled "Apology for Louis XIV. and his Council touching the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, with a Dissertation upon the Day of St. Bartholomew;" in which the author asserted that the expulsion of the Huguenots was a good to France, and that religion had nothing to do with the massacres. This was the work of which Voltaire wrote, "I have bought a bear; I shall put that book in his cage. What! they persecute M. Helvetius, and endure monsters!"

These were some of the events which kindled afresh the ire of Voltaire against *l'Infâme*, and caused him, while he was getting his new estates in order, to devote the remainder of his days to crushing it. He thought he could do this. Twelve illiterate men, he would say, founded a religion; cannot a band of philosophers eradicate *l'Infâme*? He fully believed they could, and he therefore entered upon the work with as much confidence as zeal. He had discovered, from the experiment of Doctor Akakia, the might of ridicule, when the object assailed is in itself ridiculous. But this was only one of his weapons; his fame, his works, his kings, his allies in Paris, public events, his letters and conversation, his throngs of visitors, the errors of the enemy, all were destined to be promptly utilized. The existing generation of Frenchmen himself had educated. An author, as Wordsworth remarks, has to create the taste which he gratifies; and we find the Parisians of that time curiously susceptible to Voltaire's lightest word. He also knew well the public he had formed, and it lent itself readily to his influence. The *régime*, too, as we well know, was a house divided against itself, and the very censors who condemned a book often loved it. The king himself was absurdly inconsistent: he permitted Tercier to be dismissed from his offices for relishing Helvetius's book, and then pensioned him, took him into confidence, employed him in secret service, and gave him an old age of peaceful study. Voltaire's "Natural Religion" was burnt by the hangman in March, 1759, and continued to be sold everywhere for two francs. He could send a little manuscript to Thieriot by a safe hand, and in a week the whole of the reading public of the city was laughing over it.

Madame Denis found him unmanageable from 1759. A few days after the news reached their retreat of the solemn burning of "De l'Esprit" and the "Loi Naturelle," she wrote to one of her friends: —

"My uncle is always at work. He does a hundred different things at once. His genius retains its vigor. A certain letter has appeared in the 'Mercury' which I should so much have wished him to suppress. I can no longer do anything in that way. I am so convinced of this that very often I avoid reading his manuscripts. Age has given him an invincible obstinacy, against which it is impossible to struggle; it is the only mark of old age that I perceive in him. Be sure, therefore, when you see things which he had better not have written, that I groan over them without being able to prevent their appearance. If I were not sensitive I should be very happy. He is very kind to me, provided I avoid making the least objection to anything that he does. This is the course which I have adopted, and I find it answers very well."¹

The King of Prussia, also, from the midst of his armies, observed the renewed zeal of his old master, and wrote of it as men of the world usually do of such things. The following was a famous passage in its day, and is still quoted: —

"Your zeal burns against the Jesuits and the superstitions. You do well to combat error; but do you believe that the world will change? The human mind is weak; more than three fourths of mankind are formed to be the slaves of the absurdest fanaticism. The fear of the devil and of hell is fascinating to them, and they detest the sage who wishes to enlighten them. The mass of our species is stupid [*sot*] and wicked. I look in vain among them for that image of God of which, the theologians assure us, they carry the imprint. Every man has a wild beast within him. Few know how to enchain him; most men let loose the rein when the terror of the laws does not restrain them."

Madame du Deffand often wrote in a similar strain. She assured him that every person of sense thought as he did; why then continue? "It is only the charm of your style that makes people read with pleasure what you write on that subject; for, as to the substance of the matter, it interests them no more than the mythology of the ancients."

No remonstrance moved him; he had enlisted for the war. "If," he wrote to D'Argental, "the enemies of common sense

¹ Voltaire à Ferney, page 61.

have the power (which I do not believe they have) to persecute me, girdled as I am by eighty leagues of mountains that touch the sky, I have, God be thanked, forty-five thousand livres of annual revenue in foreign countries, and I would willingly abandon what remains to me in France to go and despise, at my ease, in other lands, and with a sovereign contempt, the insolent *bourgeois*, whom the king likes no more than I do. Pardon, my divine angel, this enthusiasm; it is of a heart naturally sympathetic; he who knows not how to hate knows not how to love." And to Helvetius: "It is to the king's interest that philosophers should increase in number, and fanatics diminish. We are tranquil, and all those people are disturbers of the peace; we are good citizens, and they are seditious; we cultivate reason in peace, and they persecute it. They can cause some good books to be burned, but we will *crush* them in society; we will reduce them to be without credit in good company; and it is good company alone that governs the opinions of men."

It was in this spirit, it was after this provocation, that he set himself to the task of crushing *l'Infâme*. In following chapters we shall see some of his methods of proceeding. His health was renewed; his spirits, as Marmontel has shown us, were high; his leisure was deliciously employed; his General History was off his hands; "La Pucelle" alarmed him no more; ten minutes' walk took him out of France; and, as he has just told us, he had forty-five thousand francs per annum which the government of France could not confiscate. **ÉCRASEZ L'INFÂME.**

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE STORM OF MONOSYLLABLES.

A CERTAIN Father Berthier, the plodding, indefatigable editor of a "religious weekly" of Paris, called the "Journal de Trévoux," the organ of the Jesuits, was the first to draw his fire.

Voltaire had retained a kindly feeling for the Jesuits, by whom he had been educated; and members of the order were still among his friendly correspondents. For some time past, however, the "Journal de Trévoux" had pursued with fresh zeal the vocation of the religious newspaper, which was and is to convey the truths it hates to minds most in need of them. In other words, this journal had assailed with weak and blundering severity the Encyclopædia, Voltaire's "Essai sur les Mœurs," his poem upon Natural Religion, and other works of humanizing tendency. But to denounce those works it was necessary to name, describe, and quote them, and thus to spread abroad some knowledge of their contents among the class which the works themselves would not otherwise have reached.

Écrasez l'Infâme! On a day in December, 1759, appeared in Paris an anonymous pamphlet of thirty pages, entitled "Narrative of the Sickness, Confession, Death, and Reappearance of the Jesuit Berthier." No adequate idea can be given here of the comic richness of this burlesque, of which every sentence is a hit. The fun reaches its climax when a rival editor, a priest of a rival order, is hastily summoned to confess the dying Jesuit. It is known how tenderly the editors of rival periodicals of this kind loved one another in the last century. These two priests, who had contended for many years with pen and scissors, were unknown to each other personally, and the confession had proceeded far before either discovered who the other was. Poor Berthier at length finds himself in pur-

gatory, doomed to remain 333,333 years, 3 months, 3 weeks, and 3 days; and then only to be delivered when some brother of his order could be found who should be humble, peaceable, and without desire to go to court, who should not calumniate any one to princes, not mingle in worldly affairs, make no one yawn with his writings, and, finally, be willing to apply to Father Berthier all his merits. "What is your penance in purgatory?" The reply was, "I am obliged to make every morning the chocolate of a Jansenist, to read aloud at dinner-time a Provincial Letter, and to employ myself the rest of the time in mending the chemises of the nuns of Port Royal." Every phrase is an allusion, half lost upon us at this distance of time, but not lost upon the susceptible Parisians of 1759.

Before this burlesque tale had spent its force, another pamphlet, by the same anonymous and well-known hand, pervaded the city, entitled "Narrative of the Journey of Brother Garassise, Nephew of Brother Garasse, Successor to Father Berthier, and what followed, in Anticipation of what is to follow." This relates the election of Father Berthier's successor. Fréron is a candidate. A learned brother objects in terms like these: "My friend, you have, it is true, great qualities; but it is said in Cicero, 'Cast not the children's bread to the dogs.'" The place is given finally to Brother Garassise, who claims to possess the pen of Berthier, the insipidity of Catron, the antitheses of Porée, and the dryness of Daniel. He was the man to succeed the wearisome Berthier; who, however, continued for many years to bestow his tediousness upon his countrymen. But no reader of these two pamphlets could ever again have heard or seen his name without a smile. The ingenuity of the author is shown in the manner in which he conveys at every moment an impression of the childish ignorance of the ecclesiastical mind and the triviality of ecclesiastical topics.

The Jesuits attempted a retaliation in kind. There was published in 1761, at Geneva and Paris, a pamphlet entitled "Narrative of the Sickness, Confession and End of M. de Voltaire, and what followed, by Me, Jos. Dubois." La Harpe deemed this piece not altogether unsuccessful, but Voltaire pronounced it a "flat imitation" of his burlesque. He was preparing to pursue Berthier further, when more important game drew his attention. The next affair amused the reading

people of Europe for many months, and averted from France a truly portentous evil.

A new royal family was growing up then in France. That ill-starred prince, who was one day to reign and perish as Louis XVI., was in 1760 a heavy, tractable boy, six years old, and he was the Dauphin's third son. The royal boys were at an age when a tutor was usually appointed; and the office of tutor had twice, within living memory, led to positions of overmastering influence. De Fleury, prime minister for nearly a generation, had been tutor to Louis XV.; Boyer, Anc. Bishop of Mirepoix, had been tutor to his only son, the present Dauphin. The question, therefore, who should be again put on this directest road to the summits of power was big with interest to society, and to patriotism. A candidate appeared in the spring of 1760: a country magistrate, Le Franc, Marquis of Pompignan, a minor poet of some merit, author of many psalms and other verse, some of which was more than respectable. His strength lay in the fact that he was the last author of *any* recognized rank that was left on the orthodox side. In his youth, he had coquetted with deism, and had even translated into French verse Pope's "Universal Prayer;" but his later psalms had made amends, and he now stood forth a champion of the faith. He had a younger brother, the Bishop of Puy, a not illiberal ecclesiastic, a zealous and industrious defender of the church.

These two men hung over France in 1760 as its probable masters, the Dauphin being precisely the man to be governed by such a pair; for he had an inkling of *esprit*, and a solid preponderance of unquestioning faith. The marquis, recently enriched by marriage, the oracle of his native remote Montauban, a man of inordinate vanity, came to Paris in the early days of 1760 on an errand of deepest interest to him. He had been elected to the seat in the French Academy last filled by Mauvertuis; in March he was publicly received, when he delivered the usual speech commemorative of his predecessor. In this oration, he made what was felt to be a bid for the tutorship of the Dauphin's children, by attacking, almost by name, several of his most distinguished colleagues. He violated the sanctity of a place which all parties had hitherto cherished as an asylum of peace and good-temper amid em-

bittered controversies. In the course of his harangue, he fell upon the age itself as vaunting its superior light, while producing little but false science and shameful literature.

“What do we behold?” asked the speaker. “Here, an immense succession of scandalous libels, insolent verses, writings frivolous or licentious; there, in the class of philosophers, is seen a long display of rash opinions, systems openly impious, or direct insinuations against religion; elsewhere, the historian presents to us facts malignly disguised, satiric darts aimed at things the most holy, and against the soundest maxims of government. All, in a word, that these numberless books contain, bears the imprint of a depraved literature, corrupt morals, and an arrogant philosophy, which saps equally the throne and the altar.”

The orator resumed his seat, after three quarters of an hour of this, amid applause that seemed general because it was loud; for this style of remark was then the short way to court favor; it was the fashionable hue and cry of the moment. The chairman of the session complimented the new member warmly, and ventured to bring the orator's brother, the Bishop of Puy, into view, in a manner that is not forgotten in France to this day. He compared the magistrate to Moses, and the bishop to Aaron! “Everything retraces in you,” said the chairman, “the image of those two brothers who were consecrated, the one to be judge of Israel, and the other as pontiff to work miracles in Israel.” It was safe to stand well with these brothers; for who could say how soon they might be astride of France? *Le Franc* enjoyed a day of cloudless triumph, which many men have since enjoyed by similar means. He was admitted to the king's presence, to present in person a copy of his discourse. “I promise you that I will read it,” said the king; and he kept his word. The same day, the king asked one of his court what he thought of it. “I found it a little long, sire,” was the reply. “True,” said the king. “I was twenty minutes reading it, and it must have been longer at the Academy; but, in my opinion, it is an excellent work, and not at all likely to be applauded by the impious and headstrong.”

This king, as the reader remembers, was then in the Deer Park period of his history. In the interregnum of mistresses, between *Pompadour* and *Dubarry*, young girls of fourteen and

thirteen were bought for him ; and so pious was this father of his people that he insisted on their saying their prayers at night, and set them an edifying example by kneeling beside them. He was so pious that when the host went by he would get out of his carriage, and kneel to it in the mud, to the transport of some spectators.

Le Franc de Pompignan was well pleased with his day's work at the Academy. His discourse was promptly forwarded to Ferney. It was Le Franc who then held Voltaire's former post of historiographer of France ; a circumstance that gave point to the new member's reflections upon historical literature. A few days after, a duodecimo pamphlet of seven pages, dateless, anonymous, without name of publisher or place, snowed down upon Paris, and was seen everywhere at once. The following is a translation of it : —

THE WHENS :

BEING USEFUL NOTES UPON A DISCOURSE PRONOUNCED BEFORE THE FRENCH ACADEMY, MARCH 10, 1760.

“WHEN one has the honor to be received into an honorable society of men of letters, it is not necessary that his reception speech should be a satire against men of letters ; it is to insult the society and the public.

“WHEN, by chance, one is rich, it is not necessary to have the base cruelty to reproach men of letters with their poverty in an academical discourse, and to say, with pride, that they declaim against riches, and that they in secret envy the rich : (1) because the new member cannot know what his less opulent colleagues secretly think ; (2) because none of them envy the new member.

“WHEN one does not honor his age by his works, it is a strange temerity in him to decry his age.

“WHEN one is scarcely a man of letters at all, and not in the least a philosopher, it does not become him to say that our nation has only a false literature and a vain philosophy.

“WHEN one has translated, and even disfigured, the ‘Prayer of the Deist,’ composed by Pope ; WHEN one has been deprived six entire months of his office in the country for having translated and envenomed that formula of deism ; WHEN, finally, one has been indebted to philosophers for the enjoyment of that office, it is to be at once wanting in gratitude, in truth, and in justice to accuse the philosophers of impiety ; and it is to outrage all the proprieties to presume to speak of religion in a public discourse, before an academy, whose

maxim and law it is never to speak upon that subject in its assemblies.

“WHEN a man pronounces before an academy one of those discourses which are spoken of for a day or two, and which are even sometimes carried to the foot of the throne, it is to be culpable towards one’s fellow-citizens to dare to say in that discourse that the philosophy of our times saps the foundations of the throne and of the altar. It is to play the part of a calumniator to dare to assert that hatred of authority is the dominant character of our productions; and it is to be a calumniator with very odious imposture as well, since men of letters are not only the most submissive subjects, but they have no privilege, no prerogative, which can ever give them the least pretext not to be submissive. Nothing is more criminal than the desire to give to princes and ministers ideas so unjust concerning faithful subjects, whose studies do honor to the nation: but, fortunately, princes and ministers do not read those discourses, and those who have read them once will read them no more.

“WHEN one succeeds an oddity of a man, who had the misfortune to deny in a bad book the obvious proofs of the existence of a God, drawn from the designs, the harmonies, and the ends of all the works of creation, the only proofs admitted by philosophers, and the only proofs consecrated by the fathers of the church; WHEN that odd person did all that he could to weaken those striking testimonies of all nature; WHEN, in lieu of those striking proofs which enlighten all eyes, he ridiculously substituted an equation of algebra, it is not necessary to say that that reasoner was an atheist, because it is not proper to accuse any one of atheism, and still less the man whom one succeeds; but, also, it is not necessary to propose him as the model of religious writers; he should be silent, or at least speak with more art and decency.

“WHEN one addresses an academy in France, it is not becoming to get into a fury against the philosophers which England has produced; it is necessary rather to study them.

“WHEN one is admitted into a respectable body, he ought, in his address, to conceal under the veil of modesty the insolent pride which characterizes hot-heads and mediocre talents.”¹

This moderate and just rebuke had instantaneous success with the public. The repetition of the *when* was a kind of device that easily “brings down the house,” whether in or out of the theatre. Several diarists note the immediate interest which the little pamphlet excited in all circles. The Abbé

¹ 61 Œuvres de Voltaire, 108, 97-volume ed.

Morellet, then in the flower of his age, a recent acquisition to the philosophic band, followed up the stroke with his "Ifs," and, soon after, with his "Wherefores," — deeming it just, as he remarks, to make Le Franc run the gauntlet of the particles. Both of these pamphlets hitting the humor of the public, the abbé followed them with a reproduction of Le Franc's forgotten translation of Pope's "Universal Prayer," to which he appended notes and comments. Voltaire then took another turn with a song, in four stanzas, entitled "The Tos," which he followed with "The Thats," "The Whos," "The Whys," "The Yeses," and "The Noes." An epigram flew from hand to hand: "Do you know why Jeremiah wept so much during his life-time? It was because he foresaw, prophet-like, that one day he would be translated by Le Franc." Other hands contributed, and not a week passed without some new jest in prose or verse escaping into print, aimed at the luckless Academician. Voltaire unearthed Le Franc's early tragedy, "Dido," of which he published some ludicrous morsels, with such commentary as he knew how to give. He told MarmonTEL that his physician had ordered him to hunt Pompignan for an hour or two every morning, for the benefit of his health. The poor man could not show himself anywhere without exciting merriment.

He seemed buried, as Madame du Deffand said, under "mountains of ridicule," and well deserved to be, she thought; for he was not a simpleton merely, but hypocritical and malign.¹ But he was not so easily killed, still less buried. Much is allowed to a man who takes the king's side. He increased the general mirth by the wonderfully absurd way in which he defended himself. In reply to Morellet, he published a serious and minute narrative to show that his translation of the "Universal Prayer" was merely an exercise in English, published without his knowledge, and executed twenty-two years before. Exasperated by the relentless hail of sharp particles, he carried his absurdity to the point of addressing a remonstrance on the subject to the king and queen, which drew upon him still more stinging derision. "The whole court," said he, "was witness of the reception which their majesties accorded me. It is necessary that the universe should know, also, that

¹ Madame du Deffand to Voltaire, July 23, 1760.

their majesties appeared to occupy themselves with my work, not as a passing or unimportant novelty, but as a production which was not unworthy of the particular attention of the sovereigns."

Nothing, it would seem, could heighten the ridicule of this performance; but Voltaire pounced upon it, and prolonged the merriment with which it was received even to the present day. A little piece was issued from what Baron Grimm styled the manufactory at Ferney, purporting to be an extract from the newspaper of Le Franc's city of Montauban, which represented his townsmen as alarmed for his sanity, and sending a committee to Paris to ascertain the truth. The committee found him raving mad, uttering snatches of crazy verse (selected from his own works), while he foamed at the mouth and gritted his teeth. The messengers burst into tears, and returned to Montauban to report the melancholy tidings. But this was a trifle compared with a poem from the same source, called "La Vanité," a work of great satiric force, in Voltaire's peculiar style of serious and weighty badinage. Some of the lines of this poem are familiar now to conversation in France.

"Qu'as-tu, petit bourgeois d'une petite ville?
 L'univers, mon ami, ne pense point à toi.
 César n'a point d'asile où son ombre repose;
 Et l'ami Pompignan pense être quelque chose!"¹

Poor Pompignan fled before the storm to his native city; where, however, he retained a certain hold upon the court from the very violence of this attack. He was by no means yet destroyed as a candidate for court favor, and we shall see the king seizing opportunities to distinguish him.

¹ What is the matter with you, little *bourgeois* of a little city? . . . The universe, my friend, is not in the least thinking of you. . . . Caesar has no asylum where his shade reposes; and friend Pompignan thinks to be something.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE WAR OF COMEDIES.

LE FRANC DE POMPIGNAN vanished for a time. The monosyllables seemed to have done their work. While the air was still all alive with those singing and stinging particles, the scene of strife was suddenly transferred to the national theatre of France.

A dramatist was found who was bold enough to place the philosophers upon the stage of the Théâtre-Français, for idle Parisians to laugh at. It was Charles Palissot who thus courted the fate of Le Franc by his comedy of "Les Philosophes," produced May 2, 1760. This author, though not equal to the part he had undertaken, was a man of talent, and was supported in this attempt by two ladies of high rank and great vogue: the Princess de Robecq, a Montmorenci by birth, and the Duchess of Villeroy, of royal lineage. The Princess de Robecq had the additional prestige of being, or having been, beloved by the Duke of Choiseul, prime minister. It was she, dying of consumption as she was, who leveled all obstacles, pushed aside a tragedy of Voltaire about to be revived, and gave away, as D'Alembert records, four hundred and fifty parquette tickets for the opening night of "Les Philosophes." The blunt D'Alembert describes the author of this piece as *maquereau de sa femme et banqueroutier*, and its lovely protectresses as *des p . . . en fonctions, et des p . . . honoraires*. The curiosity of the public and two or three really effective scenes gave the play a kind of party success that resounded through Europe.

It was a slight, foolish, amusing, well-written comedy in three acts, in which Helvetius, Diderot, Rousseau, D'Argental, and others were clearly indicated; and they were represented, not merely as ridiculous, but as "sappers of the throne and the altar," destroyers of domestic peace, disturbers of pub-

lie order, mercenary and false. The Encyclopædia is mentioned by name. The noted passage upon religion in the "Henriade" of Voltaire is slightly parodied. The best point is in Act I., Scene 5, where Cydalise, the deluded victim of the New Light, describes her late worthy husband, as viewed in the light of *pure reason*: a pitifully limited being, wholly occupied with his duties, private and public, a "savage defender of Gothic prejudices." There was the hint here of really great comedy, which should show how little human life or character will bear coldly literal treatment, and how necessary it is for us to see both more and less than there is. Helvetius was the best handled of the philosophers, because he had laid himself fairly open to satire by his ill-considered audacities. It was just also to exhibit J. J. Rousseau as one of those philanthropists who knew how

"Chérir tout l'Univers, excepté leurs enfans."¹

The sensation of the play was in Scene 8 of Act III., where Crispin, personating Rousseau, comes upon the stage on all fours, with a lettuce in his pocket for provender, remarking that he has deliberately chosen the condition of a quadruped, as the result of a dominant taste for philosophy. "Upon these *four* pillars my body is better sustained, and I see fewer fools." Finally, of course, the mask is torn from the abominable philosophers; the lovers are restored to one another, and all is well.

One line of this play arrests attention: —

"Crédule est devenu l'équivalent de sot."²

It marks the humor of the time. The day was near at hand, if it had not yet come, when the line expressed what the circles of Paris fully believed to be true.

The comedy was received with acclamations that seemed as warm and as unanimous as those which had greeted Le Franc's academic speech. The Princess de Robecq, besides filling the house with friends and partisans, appeared in her box, where she welcomed the author at the end of the second act, in sight of the audience, gave him her hand, and complimented him with a show of enthusiasm. She was then obliged to leave the theatre, to which she was never able to return.

¹ To cherish all mankind, except their own children.

² *Believer* has become the equivalent of *simpleton*.

The applause, however, was neither unanimous nor disinterested. D'Alembert told Voltaire that the *few* spectators who were free to express their real opinion were revolted to such a point that, on the second night, fifty of the most libelous lines were suppressed. The Abbé Morellet was present on that second night, and went home after the play boiling with indignation. He seized his pen, and sat up till near the dawn writing a pamphlet, entitled "The Preface to the Comedy of the Philosophers;" in which he related, with a mixture of truth and burlesque, some of the less creditable events in the past life of Palissot, — an illegitimate mode of warfare, as the abbé afterwards confessed. The public received his essay with great favor, and the young humorist had the pleasure, as he tells us, of seeing "groups of readers in the Palais-Royal and the Tuileries bursting with laughter over it." His triumph was short. In the heat of composition he had made an allusion to the Princess de Robecq as "a great lady, very sick, who, before dying, had only desired one consolation, — that of being present at the first performance of this comedy; and who, having seen it, had said, 'Now, Lord, let thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen *revenge*.'"

The revenge referred to in this passage was upon Diderot, who had reflected upon the princess with severity in the preface to his "Fils Naturel." She sought vengeance by "protecting" Palissot's comedy, and exulted in its success as a triumph over Diderot and over Diderot's allies. Some one sent her a copy of Morellet's essay, marked as "from the author." She complained to her lover, the Duke of Choiseul, of this double indignity, and soon a *lettre de cachet* consigned the abbé to the Bastille, where he was confined for two months. The Princess de Robecq died fifteen days after his incarceration, aged thirty-two years.¹

Palissot sent a copy of "Les Philosophes" to Voltaire, with a highly complimentary letter, in which he owned that he had written his play to avenge the two princesses. This led to a long correspondence between them. Voltaire tried all his art to win Palissot over to do justice to the Encyclopædists, appealing to his sense of justice and to his patriotism. He defended the philosophers, and proved to him that Diderot had not

¹ 1 Mémoires de l'Abbé Morellet, 89.

libeled the princesses. Palissot, in his preface to his comedy, extolled Voltaire in terms that seemed extravagant. "You make me blush," wrote Voltaire, "when you print that I am superior to those whom you attack. I believe that I do make verses better than they, and even that I know as much of history as they; but, upon my God, upon my soul, I protest that I am scarcely their pupil in all the rest, old as I am." He called upon Palissot to avow to the public that he had never examined the Encyclopædia, and knew nothing of it except through the report of its enemies. *Then*, he could go on amusing the public with a good conscience. "A Frenchman who is not gay is a man out of his element. You write comedies; be joyous, then, and do not turn the amusement of the theatre into a criminal indictment."

He did not make a convert or a partisan of Palissot, though such letters as he wrote him might have gained a better man. In one of these humorous epistles, he begs Palissot to accuse his friends and himself of anything whatever except of not being good Christians. "Call me dotard, bad poet, plagiarist, ignoramus; but I am not willing to have my faith suspected. My curés gave me a good character, and I pray God every day for the soul of Brother Berthier."

While this amiable correspondence was going on, Voltaire was preparing a retort dramatic for the Théâtre-Français. He, too, was willing to abuse the stage of the national theatre, by making it a scene of contention; he was writing a comedy, the chief aim of which was to abase and ridicule an individual. After reading "*Les Philosophes*," he dashed upon paper, "in eight days," as he says, his comedy of "*The Scotch Lass*" (*L'Écossaise*); designed partly to defend his brethren the philosophers, but chiefly to destroy the prestige of Jean Fréron, the successor of Desfontaines, and now the most powerful enemy of the band of Encyclopædists. Fréron was the first of the Parisian editors who was able to live in sumptuous profusion from the profits of literary journalism. He inhabited elegant rooms, gave bountiful suppers, and incurred large debts. He encouraged young authors, and criticised the veterans of literature with a freedom which Paris found amusing. In the controversy between the Encyclopædists and *l'Infâme*, he took the side that journalists generally find to be the easiest way

to success; and, of late, he had been attacking them with fresh vivacity. No number of his "Année Littéraire" appeared without a paragraph designed to exhibit them in a light either odious or ridiculous. Palissot was a contributor; but, unlike Palissot, the editor was far from distinguishing between Voltaire and his allies; he assailed him in some form in almost every issue; and he had enough comic force to make most of his readers laugh with him. He diverted his subscribers this year by descanting upon Voltaire's new character of grand seigneur. It appears that, in pursuing before the courts a pirate publisher, who was a *vassal* of Tournay, Voltaire had signed a requisition thus:—

"Done at Tournay, by me, Count of Tournay."

His vassal neatly retorted by entitling the lawless pamphlet "Pieces from the Portfolio of Monsieur the Count of Tournay." The publication had great currency. The King of Prussia addressed one of his letters to the Count of Tournay, and there was much merriment at this new dignity of the author of "Zaïre." As a specimen of Fréron's manner, I give a few sentences of his on the subject:—

"You will ask me, perhaps, Who is this Monsieur the Count of Tournay? What! you don't know? So names himself that great poet, epic, tragic, comic, tragi-comic, heroic-comic, lyric, epigrammatic, satiric, cynic, episodic, philosophic; it is the title which is now assumed by that profound geometer, that transcendent Newtonian, that faithful historian, that chaste romancer, that universal man, who, by his genius and his knowledge, eclipses all writers, present, past, and to come.—in fact, M. de Voltaire. Don't think it a joke: he has bought the countship of Tournay, near Geneva; in consequence, he has himself styled, and signs all his dispatches, *Count of Tournay*. Thus we see him decorated with three different names, which may one day give tortures to the commentators. His name of *bourgeoisie* is Arouet; his name in poetry is Voltaire; and his name of *seigneurie* is *Count of Tournay*. Another ambition, very laudable, which has long tormented him, is to become secretary of state like Addison, or, at least, ambassador like Prior. His prayers are at length heard; for ought we not to regard him as minister-plenipotentiary of the Republic of Letters to the Republic of Geneva? There he watches day and night over the interests of our literature, availing himself of the freedom of the press in Geneva to enrich it with a thousand admirable works. If we should have the misfortune to lose him, it would be necessary to replace him

in that country by some skillful negotiator. But I doubt whether any other person, whoever he might be, would fill that honorable post with so much glory and success as HIS EXCELLENCY MONSEIGNEUR THE COUNT OF TOURNEY."¹

This was attempted in Voltaire's own manner; but we do not find that a cat is amused when it comes her turn to be played *with*, as she plays every day with mice. In a more aggressive manner, Fréron had recently criticised the "Candide" of Voltaire, and his comedy of "La Femme qui a Raison." Any periodical, even the most remote, the most insignificant, can be an engine of mischief; indeed, it *is* the insignificant things that are endowed with the mischief-making power. "L'Année Littéraire" was the most formidable ally of *l'Infâme*, because it could marshal its columns for the attack every week of the year, and arm them with Voltaire's own weapons. Hence it was that Voltaire followed "Les Philosophes" with a comedy in prose in five acts ("L'Écossaise"), in which he endeavored to parry Palissot's stroke, and disable Fréron.

There are gleams of good comedy in this crude and hasty piece. The scene is laid in a London tavern; the heroine is a young lady of a distinguished family of Scotland, ruined in the late civil war. She had found refuge and concealment in this tavern, where she maintained herself and her maid by furtive needle-work. Fréron figures in the play as Frélon (*hornet*). He is portrayed as a Grub Street writer, always ready to manufacture infamy at "one pistole per paragraph." A frequenter of the coffee-room of this tavern, he discovers and betrays the young lady's lineage. He gives the secret of his vocation thus: "When I discover a trifling matter, I add something to it, and something added to something makes much."

Some of Palissot's points are amusingly burlesqued. "Philosophy is very dangerous," says a coffee-house politician; "it was philosophy that made us lose the island of Minorca. . . . It is the philosophers who are lowering the public funds." Another cries, "We have much to fear this year for Jamaica; those philosophers will lose it for us." The character that saved the piece was Freeport, a bluff and burly British mer-

¹ Les Ennemis de Voltaire, page 215.

chant,—“one of those Englishmen who know how to give, but not how to behave;” perhaps the first presentation of the comedy *Englishman on the French stage*. George Coleman’s adaptation of the play for the London theatre was entitled “*The British Merchant*,” and, under that name, with a prologue by Garrick, it had much success in England in 1767.¹

In the records of the *Théâtre-Français*. I know not if there is any first night more famous than that of the production of this comedy, July 26, 1760. Voltaire had employed his usual devices to secure a favorable hearing, and the philosophic brotherhood, led by D’Argental, rallied in great force. He gave out that the new work was a translation from the English of “M. Hume, author of ‘*Douglas*,’ a brother of M. David Hume, the celebrated philosopher,” the translator being by “Jerôme Carré, a native of Montauban, driven thence by the persecution of M. le Franc de Pompignan, and now come to implore the protection of the Parisians.” On the afternoon of the great day, a burlesque letter was circulated, in which Jerôme Carré complained of the exertions of M. Fréron to prevent the production of the piece. Curiosity being thus stimulated, and the house well packed, the comedy was received with that boisterous and continuous applause which usually attends a partisan play, when the author’s party fills the judgment-seats in the parquette. It enjoyed, moreover, a first “run” of sixteen nights, being performed three times a week, and it was played in many of the large towns of Europe with great success.

“Yesterday, at the fourth representation,” wrote D’Alembert to the author, “there was a larger audience than at the first. . . . I have not yet seen it, and when I am asked why, I answer, ‘If a shoe-black had insulted me, and he should be put in the pillory for it in front of my house, I should be in no haste to thrust my head out of the window.’”

The editor of the “*Année Littéraire*” half neutralized the effect of this stroke by his well-sustained affectation of indifference to it. His demeanor was masterly. His pretty wife and himself, on the opening night, appeared conspicuous among

¹ Coleman dedicated his version thus, on its appearance in print: “To Monsieur de Voltaire the following comedy, a tribute due to the author of ‘*L’Écosaise*,’ is inscribed by his obedient servant, George Coleman.”

the spectators, and they joined in the laughter and applause, as though the matter concerned them no more than the rest of the audience. The piece was produced on a Saturday evening; Fréron's paper was published on Sundays. The very next day, therefore, he was able to retort; and he did so by inserting a pretty good burlesque, entitled "Account of a Great Battle," in which the noted philosophers who had led the applause were designated by the names applied to them in the comedy of "Les Philosophes." The "battle," said Fréron, was between men of taste, who wished the play to be hissed, and the philosophers, who wished it to be applauded; the latter being supported by all the rhymesters and prosy authors ridiculed in the "Année Littéraire."

"The redoubtable Dortidius [Diderot] was in the centre of the army; he had been elected general by a unanimous voice. His countenance was aflame, his looks were furious, his hair disheveled, all his senses were agitated, as when, dominated by his divine enthusiasm, he pronounces his oracles on the philosophical tripod. This centre contained the *élite* of the troops, that is, all those who labor upon that great Dictionary, *the suspension of which makes Europe groan*, including the compositors who printed it, the booksellers who sold it, and their clerks. . . . The men of taste advance tranquilly and in very small numbers, without commanders, without plan, and even without auxiliary troops, trusting to the justice of their cause. Too blind confidence! The curtain rises; the signal is given; the philosophic army puts itself in motion; it makes the theatre resound with acclamations; the shock of hands agitates the air, and the earth trembles under the stamping of feet. . . . At length, the feeble detachment of the people of taste was crushed by the superiority of numbers, and the barbarians found themselves masters of the field."

With more in a similar taste. It does not appear that Fréron was much injured by what he humorously styled "the *epigrams* of spider, viper, scoundrel, rascal, rogue," with which he was assailed in the play. He continued to conduct his "Année Littéraire" until his death in 1776, with only gradual abatement of prestige. Voltaire did not see anything comic in this "Account of a Great Battle." "I have just read it," he writes to Theophrastus (D'Argental). "The poor man is so wounded that he cannot laugh." The play, we are told, was often revived by the actors of the company to punish Fréron

for offensive criticism. If he presumed to censure with disagreeable severity Lekain, Clairon, Grandval, or some other important member of the troupe, the public were likely to be invited to a repetition of "L'Écossaise."

For several weeks of this summer of 1760, guardian angel D'Argental, who managed all Voltaire's dramatic business in Paris, had had the manuscript of the new tragedy of "Tancrède" in his possession, to be brought out at the moment he should deem most propitious. The production of "Les Philosophes" had clouded its prospects: but the great popularity of "L'Écossaise," not foreseen either by the author or his angel, seemed to prepare the way for its favorable reception. D'Argental, as Voltaire told him a hundred times, in his extravagant gratitude, was a consummate general in dramatic warfare. He resolved now upon a bold manœuvre.

The last performance of "L'Écossaise" occurred September 2d; and "Tancrède," the most complete contrast to that comedy which could be imagined, was produced on the following night. The scene of the comedy was a London tavern of that generation, where there was loud talk of stocks, politics, and merchandise, and where a portly merchant, fresh from a commercial voyage, came to the relief of suffering beauty with five hundred unromantic guineas. D'Argental waved his wand; the coffee-room vanished, and the scene was transferred to Sicily in the year of romance 1005. The rising of the curtain revealed a council-chamber, wherein was seen a considerable number of knightly personages, ranged in a semicircle, in consultation over the troubled fortunes of the state. Gone were the side-boxes that formerly narrowed the stage, and the crowd of dandies obstructing the entrances in the rear. For the first time on any stage the picturesque splendors of the feudal system were exhibited with an approach to their due effect, and the audience witnessed, with the pleasure that novelty excites, incidents of the tourney and the ordeal by arms, the gorgeous banners, the burnished armor, and all the showy trappings of ancient knighthood. This tragedy was a long step toward what is now so familiar to us all in the dramas of Goethe and Schiller, in the novels of Scott and his imitators. For the first time, too, there was space enough on the stage for the presentation of such a theme: a knightly

hero returning (like Ivanhoe) from long exile, and entering the lists, unknown, to bear away the palm of victory, and then to avenge the wrongs his country had done him by defeating her enemies. Lekain surpassed himself in the part of Tancrède, and Clairon, in the representation of the heroine, reached the highest point of her career as a histrionic artist. The author had given her lines and situations of almost unequaled capabilities, and she rose to them with a power that surprised her oldest admirers. Recent events had predisposed many auditors in favor of the piece, and the result was a triumph for author, for actors, and for guardian angel that surpassed their most sanguine hopes. The joyful news was promptly dispatched to the author by D'Argental.

"My divine angel," he replied, "you are the best general in Europe! You must have disposed your troops well to have gained this battle; for they say that the hostile army was considerable. *Debora-Clairon* has, then, conquered the enemies of the faithful. Satan, I hear, was in the amphitheatre, in the guise of Fréron, and a tear from a lady's eye having fallen upon the nose of the wretch, he said, '*Psh, psh,*' as if it had been holy water."

Fréron, too, displayed generalship on this occasion by reviewing the play in the calm, judicial tone, bestowing high praise upon it, and only very moderate censure. Indeed, the welcome seemed unanimous. Madame de Pompadour accepted the dedication of the play, and the king witnessed a performance of it in his theatre at Versailles. Voltaire's master, the Abbé d'Olivet, was lured from his retreat to the theatre by the general acclaim, and he protested that since the days of Roscius no such acting had been seen as that of Mademoiselle Clairon in this piece of his ancient pupil. "The day before yesterday," wrote D'Alembert to the author, "I saw '*Tancrède*' for the third time. The whole audience was in tears, including myself, and criticism begins to be silent. Let the hostile writers have their say, and be sure that this piece will keep possession of the stage. Mademoiselle Clairon is incomparable in it, and beyond all her past efforts. Indeed, she well deserves from you some signal and enduring mark of gratitude. You know, moreover, that she is a philosopher, that she alone among her comrades declared openly against

the piece of Palissot, and that she greatly promoted the success of 'L'Écossaise,' though she did not play in it."

Voltaire acted upon this hint by composing his Epistles in verse to Mademoiselle Clairon, as well as by supporting with peculiar tact and ability her protest of the following year against the excommunication, *ex officio*, of all members of her profession. "Actors," he remarked, "are paid wages by the king, and excommunicated by the church; they are ordered by the king to play every evening, and forbidden to play at all by the ritual. If they do not play, they are put into prison; if they play, they are cast into the sewers. We delight to live with them, and object to be buried with them; we admit them to our tables, and close our cemeteries against them. It is necessary to confess that we are a very reasonable and a very consistent people." For sixty years, from the night when Adrienne Lecouvreur was buried at the crossing of two roads in the outskirts of Paris, he endeavored to rescue the actors from this opprobrium.

The dedication of this play to Madame de Pompadour was a bold act on the part of the author. Considering all the circumstances, it was not less proper than bold. In his dedication, as usual, he expatiated on the art he loved above all the other arts, and congratulated its friends on the late happy clearance of the stage, which enlarged the capabilities of the acted drama. "I know," said he, "that all the pomp of decoration is not worth one sublime verse, or one sentiment; just as personal adornment is nothing without beauty. I know well that it is not a great merit to speak to the eyes; but I dare assert that the sublime and the affecting move us more deeply when they are sustained by a suitable *appareil*, and that it is necessary to strike at once the soul and the eyes." This was well; but, in his personal address to the king's mistress, he made a slip of the pen that endangered his standing with the lady.

From the memoirs of Du Hausset, her *femme de chambre*, we learn that one of the amusements of the king in madame's boudoir was reading the anonymous letters sent by friend and foe. "No one can imagine," writes the *femme de chambre*, "how frequent they were." Some of them expressed bold, hard truths concerning public affairs; others were designed to

injure individuals. She gives a specimen letter to the king that "greatly affected him," in which the Encyclopædists were represented as "sapping the foundations of religion," and the Jansenists as "tending to republicanism;" the former attacking the trunk of the tree, and the latter its branches. These fell spirits, said the writer, aided by the political economists, such as Turgot, Morellet, and Mirabeau, would, in twenty years, undermine the government. Another of these letters, addressed to Madame de Pompadour, was as follows:—

"MADAME,—M. de Voltaire has dedicated to you his 'tragedy of 'Tanerède.' This ought to have been a mark of homage, inspired by respect and gratitude. But it is an insult, and you will judge of it as the public does, if you read it with attention. You will see that this great writer feels, apparently, that the object of his eulogy is not worthy of it, and that he seeks to excuse himself in the eyes of the public. These are his terms: 'I have seen from your infancy graces and talents developing in you. I have received from you at every period of your life evidences of a bounty always equal. *If some censor could disapprove the homage which I render you, he could only be a person born with an ungrateful heart. I owe you much, madame, and I ought to say it.*' What, in reality, signify these phrases, if not that Voltaire feels it would be deemed extraordinary for him to dedicate his work to a woman whom the public judges not very estimable, but that the sentiment of gratitude ought to serve him as an excuse? Why does he suppose that this homage will find censors, when we see every day dedicatory epistles addressed to trifling persons [*caillettes*], or to women of a reprehensible life, without the least attention being paid to it?"

This letter, as Du Hausset reports, was discussed in the *boudoir* by the brother, the doctor, and the steward of madame, who agreed that the author of the epistle was very malign, and had no motive but to injure, but that, nevertheless, he was right. "From that moment," adds the *femme de chambre*, "Voltaire was lost in the mind of madame, as well as in the king's, though he could never divine the cause." There are allusions in the letters of Voltaire to something of this nature; but it appears that means were found to soothe the lady's wounded spirit. If he was in fault, the Duke of Choiseul must have shared the blame. Before printing the dedication, he sent a copy of it to that minister, who returned it with his approval, attested by the official seal. The anonymous critic,

however, had put his malevolent finger on the only slip of the kind which the swift and ceaseless pen of Voltaire ever appears to have made, and it evidently cost his friends some pains to remove the ill-impression it caused. That their success was complete was shown by the gift with which she acknowledged the compliment of the dedication. She sent the author her portrait, which adorned his house at Ferney as long as he lived.

Another incident of the publication of "Tancrède" is not less peculiar. For the cover of "L'Écossaise" the author had devised a picture of an ass braying at a lyre hanging to a tree. Under it he meant to print the name of Fréron. The editor, hearing betimes of this amiable project, announced in the "Année Littéraire" that the comedy of "L'Écossaise" was about to be published, adorned with a portrait of the author. Voltaire had just time to withdraw the caricature, and the comedy appeared without it. He was not the man to destroy such a picture. During the triumphant run of "Tancrède," Fréron's was the only voice that did not join in the applause which rewarded Mademoiselle Clairon's performance of the heroine. "Tancrède" was published early in 1761. Upon the cover the public were surprised to see the picture of an ass braying at a lyre, and under it these lines:—

"Que veut dire
Cette lyre ?
C'est Melpomène ou Clairon.
Et ce monsieur qui soupire
Et fait rire,
N'est-ce pas Martin Fréron ?"¹

So passed the year 1760, one of the most active and eventful of Voltaire's life. He might well assure Madame du Deffand, this year, when she told him of a rumor of his death, which had run over Paris, "I have never been less dead than I am at present. I have not a moment free: bullocks, cows, sheep, meadows, buildings, gardens, occupy me in the morning; all the afternoon is for study; and after supper we rehearse the pieces which are played in my little theatre. This way of life gives desire to live; but I have more of that desire than ever,

¹ Who is designated by this lyre? Melpomene or Clairon. And this gentleman who sighs and makes us laugh, is it not Martin Fréron? (*Les Ennemis de Voltaire*, page 260.)

since you deign to interest yourself in me with so much bounty. You are right in so doing, for, at bottom, I am a good man."

Besides his rustic labors, he had given this year two five-act plays to the stage, written most of the second volume of his "Peter the Great," and pelted Pompignan with a terrible storm of particles.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

ANOTHER SHOWER OF MONOSYLLABLES.

HE was not yet done with the Pompignans. Edition after edition of the "Whens," the "Whos," the "Ifs," the "Buts," the "Noes," the "Yeses," and their companion pieces continued to be sold. By way of celebrating the triumph of the Abbé Morellet's contributions, Voltaire had the sixth edition of them printed at Geneva in red ink, copies of which still exist. In July, 1760, *some* enterprising person gathered all the particles in prose and verse, and published them in an octavo of two hundred and eighty-two pages, entitled "Collection of Parisian Facetiæ for the first Six Months of 1760." This volume had a great sale, and continued to be a familiar topic for many years in French-speaking capitals and courts. There has not been produced in modern times more exquisite fooling of the kind.

It is a relief, on turning to the object of all this burlesque, to discover that nature had kindly enveloped him in a comfortable panoply of conceit, which the storm of particles could not destroy. He would probably have been let alone after the publication of this volume, if he had not himself renewed the unequal combat.

In March, 1761, died the Dauphin's eldest son, aged nine years, to the great sorrow of the affectionate French people, who still loved their royal line. The diarists of the time relate the solemn pomp of the funeral, witnessed by tens of thousands of mourning people. The procession moved from the Tuileries at half past seven in the evening, and, on its course to St. Denis, halted before every church, while the priests and monks standing in the portal chanted a prayer. All classes of the people were represented in the procession, even the paupers, sixty of whom made part of the escort. The funeral car and its horses were profusely draped with white satin; white drapery and hangings prevailed everywhere; and every sol-

dier of the thousands in attendance, whether on foot or horseback, carried a torch. The death of this young prince was the more lamented because the Dauphin himself was not a healthy man, and he was known to be much under priestly influence.

Le Franc de Pompignan, in his character of historiographer of France, published the eulogium of the little prince, in which he had the brutal taste to renew his attack upon the literature and philosophy of the age. Voltaire was prompt to accept the defiance. Another shower of printed leaves came fluttering down upon Paris, and every one was soon reading "The Fors," a seven-page tract, addressed to M. le Franc de Pompignan.

"You do not cease to calumniate the nation: FOR, even in the eulogy of the late prince, the Duke of Burgundy, when the affair in hand was to dry our tears, you speak to the heir to the throne, to the afflicted father, to the affectionate and just prince, of nothing but the false and blind philosophy that reigns in France, of reason gone astray, of hearts corrupt, of hands suspected, of minds spoiled by dangerous opinions. You say that in this age death is regarded only as a return to nothingness.

"You are wrong: FOR it is cruel to say to the royal house that France is full of spirits who have little respect for the Catholic religion, and will have little for the throne; it is barbarous to describe men of letters as dangerous, nearly all of whom are without protection; it is frightful to play the part of a defamer, when you had set up in that of a consoler."

There were eight such paragraphs in "The Fors," all well punctuated. A few days after appeared "The Ah! Ahs!" a piece of the same murderous brevity, addressed to *Moses* le Franc de Pompignan:—

"AH! AH! Moses le Franc de Pompignan, you are, then, a plagiarist, and you made us believe that you were a genius!

"AH! AH! You have, then, pillaged Father Villermet, in your History of Monseigneur the Duke of Burgundy. You believed that the property of the Jesuits was already confiscated, and you hastened to possess yourself of their style!

"AH! AH! You gave yourself out for a *favorite*, whom the royal family *requested* to write the history of the princes of France. You led us into error by saying, in your dedicatory epistle to the Dauphin and Dauphiness, 'I obey your orders;' and it turns out that you only

used the permission they deigned to give you to dedicate to them your little translation, — a permission accorded to every one asking it.

“*AH! AH!* Moses le Franc de Pompignan, you wished, then, to make all literature tremble! There was one day a braggart that gave some kicks to a poor devil, who received them with respect; but a brave fellow came up who kicked the braggart. Then the poor devil turned, and said to his assailant, ‘*Ah! ah!* monsieur, you did not tell me you were a poltroon;’ and he kicked the braggart, in his turn, with which the neighborhood was marvelously content. *Au! Au!*”

These supplementary particles were followed by other satirical pieces; and, indeed, whenever Pompignan aired his pretensions, which he was likely to do on slight pretext, a new burlesque from the “manufactory of Ferney” might be expected. The season of 1763 was rich in such productions. There was a Narrative of the journey of Le Franc from Pompignan to Fontainebleau, as written by himself to his village solicitor, in the most ridiculous style of provincial bombast. There were some Letters of a Philadelphia Quaker to the Bishop of Puy, brother to the marquis, commenting upon the pastorals of the bishop in a strain of comic gravity. There was a Letter from the Secretary of M. de Voltaire to the Secretary of M. le Franc de Pompignan. Voltaire wrote a new Pompignan song to a familiar air, and sent both words and music to his friends, with an accompaniment for the guitar. He entitled this leaf, “Hymn sung at the Village of Pompignan.”

“*Nous avons vu ce beau village
De Pompignan,
Et ce marquis, brillant et sage,
Modeste et grand,
De ces vertus premier garant.
Et vive le roi, et Simon le Franc,
Son favori,
Son favori!*”¹

There were eight of these stanzas; they scarcely required music, for they sing themselves. The circulation of this song seems to have been the finishing stroke. The French people are the quickest in the world to catch such a refrain; and we are assured that the boys in the streets sang it *at the Le*

¹ We have seen this fine village of Pompignan, and this marquis, brilliant and wise, modest and grand, of his virtues first voucher. Live the king and Simon le Franc, his favorite, his favorite!

Francs as they passed. Wagnière records that there was a third brother Le Franc, an officer in the army, who wrote a letter to Voltaire, threatening him with personal chastisement if he did not let his brothers alone. Voltaire sent the letter to the Duke of Choiseul, with a note of his own; which latter did not remain in the minister's portfolio. It was "handed about" in Paris, as the custom was.

"I do not know, *Monsieur le Duc*, what I have done to these Messieurs le Franc. One of them flays my ears every day, and the other threatens to cut them off. I will take care of the rhymster; I abandon the bully to you; FOR I have need of my ears to hear what renown says of you."

The *bourgeois* marquis was seldom seen again in the circles whose suffrage he had rashly courted. To present readers of the mass of comicalities which he called forth the penalty he suffered may seem excessive; but it did not appear so to well-informed people of that day. Here is a conversation on the subject which occurred in the boudoir of Madame de Pompadour, between Dr. Quesnay, her physician, and Mirabeau, author of "*L'Ami des Hommes*," now better known as the father of the revolutionary orator. Quesnay was a good-tempered man of the world, a friend of the Encyclopædists, and prone to do them a good turn when he could. Mirabeau, a fanatic of *noblesse*, was esteemed, at a later day, a friend of the Le Francs; he was disposed to make light of the doctor's apprehensions.

MIRABEAU. — "I find the king not looking too well; he ages."

QUESNAY. — "So much the worse! A thousand times so much the worse! It would be the greatest loss for France, if he should die."

MIRABEAU. — "I do not doubt that you love the king, and with good reason; but I have never seen you so moved before."

QUESNAY. — "Ah! I am thinking of what would follow."

MIRABEAU. — "Why? The Dauphin is virtuous."

QUESNAY. — "Yes, and full of good intentions, and he has some *esprit*; but the bigots will have an absolute empire over a prince who regards them as oracles. The Jesuits will govern the state, as at the end of Louis XIV. The parliaments will be no better treated than my friends, the philosophers."

MIRABEAU. — "But the philosophers go too far, also. Why openly attack religion?"

QUESNAY. — "I agree with you; but how is it possible not to be in-

dignant at the fanaticism of the other party, and not to remember all the blood which has flowed during the last two hundred years?"

MIRABEAU. — "Nevertheless, the Dauphin is virtuous, well-instructed, and not wanting in *esprit*."

QUESNAY. — "It is the first part of his reign that I fear, when the imprudences of our friends will be exhibited to him with the greatest force; when the Jansenists and the Molinists will make common cause, and will be strongly supported by the Dauphiness. I had thought that M. du Muy¹ was a moderate man, who would temper the violence of the others; but I have heard him say that Voltaire deserved the last penalties of the law. Be sure, monsieur, that the times of John Huss, of Jérôme of Prague, will return; but I hope I shall not live to see them. I much approve Voltaire in his hunting down the Pompignans. The *bourgeois* marquis, but for the ridicule with which he has been inundated, would have been preceptor to the royal princes of France; and, united to his brother George, he would have brought back the stake and the fagot."

MIRABEAU. — "What ought to reassure you concerning the Dauphin is that, notwithstanding the devotion of Pompignan, the prince turns him into ridicule. Some time ago, having met him, and observing that he seemed swollen with pride, the Dauphin said to some one, who repeated it to me, —

'Et l'amî Pompignan pense être quelque chose!'"

Dr. Quesnay, in this conversation, expressed the apprehensions of the whole philosophic fraternity. In allusion to the "deluge of monosyllables," Voltaire wrote thus to his old friend Cideville: "I do not love war too well; in my life I have never attacked any one; but the insolence of those who dared persecute reason was carried too far. If Le Franc had not been covered with opprobrium, the custom of declaiming against the philosophers in the reception discourses at the Academy would have passed into a law, and we should have had a conflict every year. Again I say, I do not love war; but when we are compelled to make it, we must not fight softly."

He was also capable, in calmer moments, of doing justice to the merits both of Le Franc and Fréron. La Harpe mentions that at Ferney, one day, he read aloud to Voltaire, without naming the author, a passage from Le Franc's ode upon the Death of J. B. Rousseau, in which the detractors of that poet were compared to the dusky savages of the Upper Nile who

¹ Formerly under-governor of the Dauphin.

howl at the sun, while "the god of day, pursuing his career, pours torrents of light upon his obscure blasphemers." Voltaire cried, "Ah, mon Dieu! how fine that is! Who is the author?" "It is M. le Franc." "What! Le Franc de Pompidan?" "The self-same." "Let us see, then; repeat it." La Harpe read it a second time. "I do not take back what I said, — no, I do not; the passage is beautiful."

So, also, of Fréron. The Marquis de Prie records that, being at Ferney, he asked his host whom he should consult at Paris with regard to the merit of the new books. "Apply to that scoundrel of a Fréron," was the reply; "he is the only man who can do what you require." The marquis, who had witnessed the late conflict between them, could not conceal his astonishment. "On my faith, yes," continued Voltaire; "he is the only man who has taste. I am obliged to confess it, although I love him not, and have good reason for not loving him."

CHAPTER XXIX.

VOLTAIRE BUILDS A CHURCH AND ADOPTS A DAUGHTER.

WE have not yet quite done with the activities of 1760. In August, during the first run of "L'Écossaise," and while the monosyllables were still singing in the air, it was noised abroad in Paris that Voltaire was building a church at Ferney. The lord of Ferney himself communicated this item of intelligence first to his guardian angels, the D'Argentals, August 3d: "Do you know what occupies me at present? Building a church at Ferney; I shall dedicate it to the angels. Send me your portrait and that of Madame Scaliger [Countess of Argental], that I may place them upon my great altar. I wish it to be known that I am building a church."

And a few days after to idle Thieriot: "I am building a church: it will not be St. Peter's at Rome; but the Lord hears everywhere the prayers of the faithful; he has no need of columns of porphyry or candelabras of gold. Yes, I am building a church: announce this consoling news to the children of Israel; let all the saints rejoice at it. The wicked will say, no doubt, that I am building this church in my parish in order to throw down the one which conceals a beautiful prospect, and to have a grand avenue; but I let the impious talk, and go on working out my salvation."

If the "wicked" made the remarks which he predicted they would, they spoke the truth. Close to his new house was the small, old, and ugly parish church of Ferney, with a dismal cemetery adjoining it, from which rose a tall, weather-stained, repulsive crucifix. Upon conferring with his builders, he found that the church could be taken down and rebuilt in a less inconvenient place, a few yards distant, for twelve thousand francs. He resolved to incur this expense; and, having obtained the requisite consent of his bishop, his curé, and his handful of villagers, he signed a contract for the execution of the work. The contract has been found: it runs thus: —

“THIS DAY, August 6, 1760, Master Guillot and Master Desplace have engaged to build the walls of the church and sacristy of the parish of Ferney, at the place which will be indicated by monsieur the curé; the church, nave and choir, to be of the same dimensions precisely as the church, nave and choir, now existing near the château, in order that the beams and rafters of the old building may serve for the new one. They will build the whole of the same height as the old church, and of the same stone, called *blocaille* or *blocage* [un-hewn]; they will make the windows as near as may be of the same dimensions; they will use the portal which belongs to the old church, removing it from the place where it now is, and placing stanchions to support the said ancient portal, only taking care to cause the portal of the new church to project four inches. They will make two pilasters project four inches on each side of the portal, with a pediment of soft stone above the little portal. These four plain pilasters will be of brick, which they will cover with plaster, or with a good coat of whitewash. There will be no other ornaments. The whole to be done at the price of the walls of the château of Ferney; the hewn stone at the same price; and the said work, being complete, will be paid for in full on the 1st or 15th of October next, the day on which the said contractors engage to deliver the building to the carpenters for the roofing. Done at the château of Ferney, on the said August 6, 1760.”¹

Before the carpenters began their part of the work there was turmoil in Ferney, through the impetuosity of its lord. With his workmen about him, he proceeded to the demolition of the church, with little more ceremony than if it had been (what it looked like) an old barn. The walls of the cemetery were swiftly leveled. The church was dismantled; it was even half tumbled into ruin, while the sacrament was still in its place on the altar. “Take away that gibbet!” the master was reported to have said, pointing to the crucifix outside of the church. He went too fast; some consideration is due to whatever virtuous human beings, age after age, have halloed by their veneration. Moreover, he was supposed to have broken the law.

The curé of Moëns, a parish adjoining Ferney, who had had litigation with Voltaire, and cherished resentment against him, saw his opportunity of revenge, and hastened to improve it. It is the faithful and too modest secretary, Wagnière, who tells this story, and explains the cause of the priest’s animos-

¹ *Ménage et Finances de Voltaire*, par L. Nigolardot. Paris, 1854. Page 158.

ity. The curé of Moëns, it appears, like most of the remoter parish priests of that age, was policeman, justice, squire, and priest, all in one, and ruled his villagers, in the absence of the seigneur, with a high hand. Voltaire had already defended his own parishioners against the tyranny of this priest. One day, in 1759, a young man was brought to his château, bruised and bleeding from many wounds, and, apparently, half dead. Wagnière explains:—

“The curé of Moëns, having learned that three young men, on their return from hunting, were supping with a widow of respectable family in a hamlet of his parish, half a league from his residence, took four strong and robust peasants, armed with thick sticks, himself also carrying one, led them over the snow on a winter evening at nine o'clock to the widow's house, and beat them to insensibility, though they asked for quarter. One of them lay long at death's door. M. de Voltaire, to whose house he was brought, interested himself earnestly in getting justice done this unfortunate young man. The affair was compromised at length, and it cost the curé a good deal of money. He never pardoned this interference, and now he believed the moment favorable for his revenge. . . . He induced the curé of Ferney to remove the sacrament into his church, persuading him, as well as the inhabitants of Ferney, that M. de Voltaire had profaned theirs. He pretended, also, that M. de Voltaire had said, in the presence of a very devout seamstress, speaking of the cemetery cross, ‘*Take that gibbet [potence] away.*’ In fact, the curé of Ferney, terrified, with tears in his eyes, followed by his parishioners, also in tears, went in procession to carry the holy sacrament to the church at Moëns. The curé of Moëns then denounced M. de Voltaire, before the ecclesiastical judge [*official*] of the county of Gex, as guilty of impiety and sacrilege. The whole apparatus of justice, secular and ecclesiastical, was arrayed against Ferney. A criminal suit of the most violent character was begun against the lord of the place, and those gentlemen indulged the confident hope that M. de Voltaire would be burned, or at least hanged, for the greater glory of God and the edification of the faithful. This they said even publicly.”

The affair was indeed serious, and it cost him much trouble to baffle the irate pastors. His workmen were brought to a stand by formal interdict, and scattered to their homes in alarm. The work was suspended for several weeks: he was obliged to remove the altar, the bells, the confessionals, and the founts three miles away, that his villagers might attend mass

during the interval. Meanwhile, there was much sending to Paris for ecclesiastical law books and works upon church history; there was also vigilant search in the same for precedents; there was voluminous correspondence with a learned advocate of Lyons; there were subtle disquisitions as to how far a church may be demolished without ceasing to be a church; there were cross-questionings of workmen to ascertain whether M. de Voltaire had called the crucifix a gibbet or a post, a *potence* or a *potreau*; there were counter-suits brought by the lord of Ferney against the curés for illegal assumptions of authority; there were communings on the question whether the bishop could or could not be compelled to rebless the rebuilt church; and, if not, then what? Would it not in that case be a Protestant temple?

He struck terror to the accusing priests by producing a royal ordinance of 1627, forbidding a curé to serve either as prosecutor or judge in such cases. They had broken this ordinance, and he threatened to come upon them for damages to the extent of his whole loss. In a word, he led these ecclesiastics such a dance up and down the ordinances and precedents, the accumulation of ages, that they were glad to be allowed quietly to drop the prosecution, and permit him to complete the church according to his original plan. "Bishop, judge, prosecutor, Jesuit," he wrote in June, 1761, "I have beaten them all; and I am building my church as I wish, and not as they wished."

Nor was this the end of his victory over them. He loved to signalize and decorate a triumph. He shall relate here this wonderful tale himself, as he related it to D'Argental, when that guardian spirit remonstrated against his wasting upon such trifles as these time which might have enriched the national theatre with another drama:—

"My destiny is to scoff at Rome and make her serve my little purposes. The adventure of 'Mahomet' encouraged me. I am making, then, a pleasant request to the holy father: I ask of him some relics for my church, an absolute domain in my cemetery, an indulgence *in articulo mortis*, and for my lifetime a beautiful bull for myself alone, giving permission to cultivate the soil on *fête* days without being damned. My bishop is a fool [*sot*] who was unwilling to grant the unfortu-

nate land of Gex the permission I ask, and this abominable custom of getting drunk in honor of the saints, instead of working, still prevails in many dioceses."

These modest requests went their way to Rome. Meanwhile, the church being finished, and there being then, as he remarked, no church in France dedicated to God, he inscribed on it, DEO SOLO (to God alone),—an inscription which he afterwards changed to the one it now bears: DEO EREXIT VOLTAIRE. The edifice was duly reblessed. The crucifix, once so unpleasing an object, was redecorated, made "as splendid as a Roman emperor," and set up inside the church. On Sundays the lord of Ferney sometimes went to mass, when he was duly incensed; such an honor appertaining to feudal *seigneurie*.

His petition to the Pope, being supported by the Duke of Choiseul and the French ambassador, was granted in part. On the same day in October, 1761, two interesting objects reached the château of Ferney. One was the portrait of Madame de Pompadour, given by the marquise herself to the author of "Tancrède," in acknowledgment of the dedication of the tragedy. The other was a relic, sent by the Pope, in compliance with Voltaire's request, for the new church of Ferney. This relic was a small piece of the hair-shirt (*cilice*) of St. Francis. "Thus, you see," he wrote to a friend of Madame de Pompadour, "I am very well, both for this world and for the other." He was much amused by the arrival of the relic on the same day as the portrait, and did not fail to let Paris know the coincidence. It was a notification to persons and powers concerned that M. de Voltaire, after forty years of exertion, had conquered the liberty of saying and doing very nearly all he pleased.

Yet, not *quite* all, as his next exploit showed. Indeed, this happy termination of the controversy occurred none too soon; for a new inmate was coming to Ferney, who could scarcely have remained there if the master of the château had been in open feud with the priests of the neighborhood.

The polite people of Paris were much interested at this time in the family of a nephew of the illustrious Corneille, author of the "Cid," and the "father" thereby of French tragedy. This family having been reduced by a series of misfortunes to

destitution, Fréron, in his "Année Littéraire," proposed that one of Corneille's dramas should be performed at the Théâtre-Français for their benefit. The company, with the usual generosity of their profession, entered warmly into the scheme, and were so well seconded by the public that the proceeds amounted to five thousand five hundred francs. Old debts absorbed the greater part of the money, and soon the Corneilles saw the wolf again very close to their door,—parents and children, of whom the eldest was a daughter past seventeen.

Friends in Paris called Voltaire's attention to the family, and spoke highly of Marie as a young lady of pleasing appearance and excellent disposition, who only needed education to be everything heart could wish. It occurred to him to give her as a companion to his niece, and to assume the charge of her education and establishment. With assistance, she wrote a letter to Voltaire, which greatly pleased him; and, indeed, she had inherited a tincture of the family talent. The letter reached him in November, 1760, while his church was still in ruins, and his priests were in full cry after him. In his reply, he was not unmindful of these circumstances, nor of their possible effect upon a father and mother who were dependent upon charity.

"Your name, mademoiselle, your merit, and the letter with which you honor me augment in Madame Denis and myself the desire to receive you, and to deserve the preference which you are pleased to give us. I ought to say to you that we pass several months of the year in a country neighborhood (Les Délices) near Geneva; but you will have all possible facilities and aids for the duties of religion. Moreover, our principal abode is in France, a league from there, in a very tolerable château, which I have recently built, and in which you will be much more commodiously lodged than in the house where I have the honor to write to you. In both houses you will find the means of occupation, as well in such of the lighter labors of the hand as you may prefer as in music and study."

He sent orders to his notary in Paris to supply the needed money, and in December, 1760, she came to Les Délices, where he was passing the winter. "We find her," he wrote, a few days after, to D'Argental, "natural, cheerful, sincere. She has the plump face of a puppy, most beautiful eyes, a most

beautiful complexion, a large mouth sufficiently alluring, with two rows of pearls." They were both surprised at her ignorance. She had learned by herself to read and write a little; and Voltaire began at once, the very week of her arrival, to give her a daily lesson in both. In a few days, he began to look about for a tutor; he was resolved to afford her all the advantages which she could have had if she had been a young lady of rank. "I am a soldier," he would say; "it becomes me to take care of the daughter of my general." In a month he was enraptured with her amiable character and engaging demeanor.

"Her heart [he wrote, January 15, 1761] appears excellent, and we have every reason to hope that, if we do not make a learned woman of her, she will become a very amiable person, who will have all the virtues, the graces, and the good-nature which make the charm of society. What pleases me in her above all things is her attachment to her father, and her gratitude to all the persons to whom she is under obligation. She has been a little sick. You can judge if Madame Denis has taken care of her! She is very well attended to; a *femme de chambre* has been assigned her, who is enchanted to be near her. All the servants love her; each of them contends for the honor of executing her little commissions, which assuredly are not difficult. We have discontinued our lessons, while a violent cold compels her to a strict regimen and rest from all labor. She begins to mend. We are about to resume our lessons in spelling. Our first care must be to enable her to speak her native tongue with simplicity and nobleness. We make her write every day; she sends me daily a little note, which I correct, and she gives me an account of what she has read. It is not yet time to give her masters; so far, she has none except my niece and myself. We do not let pass either incorrect expressions or vicious pronunciations; custom makes all easy. We do not forget the little labors of the hand. There are hours for study and hours for embroidery. I ought not to omit that I accompany her myself to the mass of the parish. We owe the example, and we give it."

A few days after, to D'Argental: "I have terrible affairs on my hands; . . . but my most difficult task is to teach grammar to Mademoiselle Corneille, who has no disposition to that sublime science."

She appears, however, to have made good progress in composition. He gave her the pen, one day, in the first month of her residence, as he was finishing a letter to D'Argental, and

she wrote, "M. de Voltaire calls M. and Madame d'Argental his angels. I have discovered that they are mine also. Will they permit me to present to them my tender gratitude? Corneille." To which he added, "*Eh, bien!* It seems to me that Chimène¹ begins to write a little less on the diagonal. My angels, we kiss the end of your wings, Denis, Corneille, and V."

Thus was he tasting, at length, some of the delights of paternity, which, had he lived in another time or land, he might have enjoyed in full measure long before, and been now surrounded by worthy sons and daughters, the richest recompense of honorable living. Like a veritable French father, he went with this new daughter to mass, and he took care that her father and her father's friends should know it. Events soon proved that this was a necessary precaution. Here was a lamb lost from the fold, and gone to live in the very den of the wolf, to be devoured at his leisure. She had spent a short time recently at a convent-school in Paris, and it was from that convent that she went to the château of Voltaire! There was much remark upon this circumstance in the pious circles of the metropolis; Jansenists and Molinists could sincerely unite in deploring it. A Jesuit priest, one Abbé de la Tour-du-Pin, a relation of the Corneilles, urgently solicited a *lettre de cachet*, to enable him to "ravish her from the asylum" which had been given her. "What would have become of the poor child," wrote Voltaire, "if she had had no other protector than this bad relation?" Fréron, in the "Année Littéraire," gave expression to the feelings of the religious circles by paragraphs that were ingeniously malign.

"You would scarcely believe," said he, "the noise which this generosity of M. de Voltaire makes in the world. It is spoken of in the gazettes, in the journals, in all the public papers; and I am persuaded that those pompous announcements are giving much pain to that modest poet, who knows that the principal merit of laudable actions is to keep them secret. It seems, besides, from this *éclat*, that M. de Voltaire is not accustomed to give such proofs of his goodness of heart, and that it is the most extraordinary thing in the world to see him cast a look of sensibility upon a young unfortunate. But,

¹ Chimène is the name of the heroine in the Cid of Corneille.

a year ago, he did the same thing to a *Sieur de l'Écluse*, formerly an actor at the Opera-Comique, whom he lodges, maintains, and, in a word, treats like a brother. We must own that, on leaving her convent, *Mademoiselle Corneille* has fallen into good hands."

Continuing his attacks, he said, in another number of his journal, that "the father of the young lady was a kind of little clerk of a two-penny post, at fifty francs a month wages, and that his daughter had left a convent to receive at the house of *M. de Voltaire* her education from a circus-clown."

When men use such missiles as these in personal contention, it often happens that the anguish of the dastardly blow is borne by innocent women, unseen and silent. These paragraphs lost the young lady a husband; perhaps saved her from a bad one. A young gentleman of the neighborhood, in March, 1761, when she had been but three months domesticated at *Les Délices*, asked her hand in marriage; but, upon reading such paragraphs in the "*Année Littéraire*," his pride of *noblesse* took the alarm; he grew cold and distant, and finally relinquished her. The insinuations, moreover, were groundless. *L'Écluse*, once an excellent actor, was then a dentist, established at Geneva, and not an inmate of *Voltaire's* house, except when his professional services were required there. A modest employment had indeed been found for *M. Corneille*, but it was legitimate and respectable.

Upon hearing of these libels, *Voltaire* sent for the numbers containing them. He was roused to the last degree of indignation, and exerted all the influence he could command to get justice done his ward. He failed, because *Fréron* was "protected" by the timid minister, *Malesherbes*. "If a gentleman in *ac*," he wrote, "coming from Gascogne, saw his daughter insulted in the pages of *Fréron*, if it should be said of her that she was educated by a circus-clown, he would ask satisfaction for the affront, and he would get it." But *Marie Corneille* was only the descendant of an author educated by an author. "Such is the way of thinking, proud and base at once, of the light citizens of Paris!"

He proceeded on this occasion in his usual method, which was, first, to demand justice from the appointed ministers of justice; and, after denial, to use the means that nature and

circumstances gave him. He took revenge upon Fréron by epigram and burlesque; he did justice to Mademoiselle Corneille by providing for her such a dowry as gave her a choice among many suitors. I will copy only one of the Fréron epigrams here. A certain Abbé la Coste, a noted bigamist, died in the Toulon galleys, to which he had been condemned. The following stanza was set afloat in Paris: —

“ La Coste est mort. Il vaque dans Toulon
Par cette perte un emploi d'importance.
La bénéfice exige résidence,
Et tout Paris vient d'y nommer Fréron.”¹

Many men could have written this epigram, but only Voltaire could have provided Marie Corneille with the dowry of revenue and celebrity which he set about securing for her. With the consent of the French Academy, he issued proposals for the publication by subscription of an edition of the works of Pierre Corneille, in several volumes, to be edited and annotated by himself; the whole profit of the edition to be invested for the dramatist's grand-niece. Never was such a scheme more ably managed, or more successful. All the potentates and powers of Europe seemed to contend which should respond to the editor's proposals with the most alacrity and munificence. The King of France subscribed for two hundred copies, at forty francs each; the Empress of Russia for two hundred; the Emperor and Empress of Austria for one hundred each; Madame de Pompadour for fifty. This is merely another way of stating that the court and nobility of France, Austria, and Russia subscribed liberally. Voltaire himself, besides advancing the preliminary expenses, besides laboriously annotating the thirty-three plays, and conducting every detail of the enterprise, subscribed himself for a hundred copies. As a specimen of his method, I may give his application to William Pitt, then at the summit of his ministerial career, the pride of his own country, and the terror of her enemies. Voltaire wrote to him in English, July 19, 1761, from Ferney: —

“ MONSIEUR, — While you weigh the interests of England and France, your great mind may at one time reconcile Corneille

¹ La Coste is dead. There is vacant in Toulon by this loss a place of importance. The benefice requires residence, and all Paris nominates for it Fréron.

with Shakspeare. Your name at the head of subscribers shall be the greatest honor the letters can receive; 't is worthy of the greatest ministers to protect the greatest writers. I dare not ask the name of the king; but I am assuming enough to desire earnestly so great a favor.

“Je suis avec un respect infini pour votre personne et pour vos grandes actions, monsieur, votre très-humble et très-obéissant serviteur,

VOLTAIRE.

“Gentilhomme Ordinaire de la Chambre du Roi.”

Mr. Pitt replied, September 9, 1761, from St. James's Square, London:—

“The pressure of business is but a feeble reason for having deferred answering the honor of a letter from M. de Voltaire, and on so interesting a subject. For who so insensible to the true spirit of poetry as not to admire the works and respect the posterity of the great Corneille? Or what more flattering than to second, in any manner, those pious cares offered to the manes of the founder of French tragedy by the genius who was reserved to perfect it? I feel the high value of the favorable sentiments you are so good as to express on any subject, and am happy in this occasion of assuring you of the distinguished consideration with which I have the honor to be, &c.,

W. PITT.”

There was a considerable subscription in England, to follow the most illustrious English name. Many royal and princely persons paid for their copies in advance; so that, as early as May, 1761, before a volume was ready, he had invested for his ward money enough to produce an annual revenue of fifteen hundred francs; and this was but the beginning. “You will see,” he wrote exultingly to her friend, M. le Brun, “that she will end by keeping a good house.” Besides: “She is more amiable than ever; every one loves her disposition,—gay, gentle, uniform,—and she plays comedy very prettily.”

The great task, thus lightly undertaken, was performed with laborious assiduity and thoroughness. Next to his “Annals of the Empire,” it was the most tedious and worrying task of his life. “I am reproached,” he wrote to Madame du Defand, after it was done, “with having been too severe: but I desired to be useful, and I was often very discreet. The prodigious number of faults against the language, against clear-

ness of ideas and expressions, against the proprieties, and, finally, against the interest, so terrified me that I did not say half of what I might have said. This toil was exceedingly ungrateful and disagreeable; but it served to marry two girls, — a thing that never before happened to a commentator, and never will again.” Indeed, he did the work so well that his commentary upon Corneille remains to this day one of the text-books prized by students of the French language and drama. The edition was completed in 1764, in twelve volumes octavo, and was reprinted, a few years after, in eight volumes. The commentary was also published in 1764 by itself in two volumes, and has been since often reprinted.

The young lady had thus become a prize for the competition of eligible young gentlemen; for her *dot* was something handsome. Beside the fifteen hundred francs per annum, there were forty thousand francs of subscriptions due, on the completion of the work; and Voltaire settled upon her as a gift a small estate, valued at twenty thousand francs. Suitors could not be wanting. Adventurers appeared, who possessed nothing more precious than debts and bad habits. At length, the right man presented himself: a near neighbor, “a cornet of French dragoons, young, gentle, brave, of a good figure, and possessing ten thousand francs a year.” Dupuits was the name of this fortunate young man. The wedding occurred in February, 1763, to the great content of all concerned; and it is pleasing to observe the exactitude with which Voltaire fulfilled the proprieties of the occasion. He sent the parents of the bride a present of twenty-five louis; he gave them also a formal invitation to the wedding; but he implored the D’Argentals to dole the money out to them in small sums.

“They say,” he explained, “that the first thing the father will do when he gets some money will be to come quick to Ferney. God preserve us from it! We throw ourselves at the wings of our angels, that they may prevent him from being at the marriage. His appearance, his language, his employment, would not succeed with the family into which Mademoiselle Corneille is about to enter. The Duke of Villars and the other Frenchmen who will be at the ceremony would make some bad jokes. If I consulted only myself, I should assuredly have no repugnance; but all the world is not as philosophical

as your humble servant; and, patriarchally speaking, I should be very glad to have the father and mother witnesses of their daughter's happiness."

All went well, and the marriage appears to have been successful in every respect. He did not lose his ward by giving her away; for the married pair continued to reside under his roof, and there their children were born. He might well exclaim, as he did, when the commentary was complete, "I thank God I have fulfilled all the obligations I undertook!" although, as he elsewhere remarks, he had "sweat blood and water" in doing it.

It was long before he was done with the family; for other Corneilles emerged to view, in hopes of similar fortune. "We are menaced," he wrote in 1763, "with a dozen more little Corneilles;" and, indeed, a veritable grandson of Pierre, in a direct line, came to see him. In the same year, a young man claimed free admission to the Théâtre-Français, on the ground that he was a descendant of the family of Racine. The request was refused without ceremony.

The presence of Marie Corneille consoled him for the tedious labor of commenting; for she added to his home an element necessary to its completeness. "Our child," he writes to one of the "brethren" in 1765, — "our child, Madame Dupuits, has just given birth at seven months to a boy, who died at the end of two hours. He was, fortunately, baptized; it is a great consolation. Adieu, my dear crusher of *l'Infâme* (*éc. de l'inf.*)."

In due time a daughter was born, in whom he discovered "singular talents."

Besides Racines and Corneilles, other forlorn bearers of distinguished names besought him to efface the discrepancy between their lineage and their lot; and it required all his tact to parry or divert some of these solicitations. The late Madame George Sand cherished two interesting letters of this period, which connect it with the present time. In communicating these letters to the collector who gave them to the public, she wrote, "My grandmother, Aurora de Saxe, Countess of Horn, found herself reduced to a little pension from the Dauphiness; and even that suddenly failed her, one fine day. On this occasion she wrote to Voltaire, who replied to her in a charming letter, of which she availed herself with the Duchess

of Choiseul." The letter of the Countess of Horn, dated August 24, 1768, was as follows:—

"It is to the singer of Fontenoy that the daughter of Marshal Saxe addresses herself, in order to obtain bread. I was recognized: Madame the Dauphiness took care of my education after my father's death. That princess withdrew me from the convent of Saint-Cyr to marry me to M. de Horn, chevalier of the order of Saint-Louis, and captain in the Royal-Bavarian regiment. For my dowry she obtained his promotion as king's lieutenant at Schelestadte. My husband, on arriving at that place, in the midst of the *fêtes* given us there, suddenly died. Since then, death has taken away my protectors, the Dauphin and Dauphiness. Fontenoy, Rancoux, Lawfelt, are forgotten. I am abandoned. I have thought that he who has immortalized the victories of the father would be interested in the misfortunes of the daughter. To him it belongs to adopt the children of heroes, and to be my support, as he is that of the daughter of the great Corneille. With that eloquence which you have consecrated to plead the cause of the unfortunate you will cause to resound in all hearts the cry of pity, and you will acquire as much claim to my gratitude as you already have to my respect and to my admiration for your sublime talents."

To this letter Voltaire replied in a way to accomplish the purpose without further expense to himself:—

"Madame, I shall go very soon to rejoin the hero, your father, and I shall inform him with indignation of the condition in which his daughter now is. I had the honor to live much with him; he deigned to have much favorable regard for me. It is one of the misfortunes which overwhelm me in my old age to see that the daughter of the hero of France is not happy in France. If I were in your place, I would go and present myself to the Duchess of Choiseul; for then your name would cause both leaves of her door to open, and the duchess, whose soul is just, noble, and beneficent, would not let such an opportunity of doing good pass unimproved. This is the best advice I can give you, and I am sure you will succeed when you speak to her. Doubtless, you did me too much honor when you thought that a sick old man, persecuted, and withdrawn from the world, could be so happy as to serve the daughter of Marshal Saxe. But you have done me justice in not doubting the lively interest I take in the daughter of so great a man."¹

¹ Lettres Inédites de Voltaire. Par M. de Cayrol. Paris, 1857. Vol. ii. page 146.

This letter, as it appears, had its designed effect in procuring relief to the lady. The Countess de Horn married a farmer-general soon after, and was thus enabled to rear her granddaughter in the château of Nohant, which supplied the novelist with so many available reminiscences.

But this is far from the château of Ferney, to which we now return. Voltaire's little church was finished; the hideous old cemetery was rearranged; the park and gardens were laid out; the great barn, the bee-hives, the silk-house, were in operation. Seizing in Ferney his final home, he withdrew more and more from Les Délices, and "amused himself" by building a tomb partly within his church, for the resting-place of his bones. "Two little boys," he remarked, "could carry me to the grave;" but it was not the less necessary to have one; and he was resolved that the lord of Ferney should not be buried in the manner of Adrienne Lecouvreur. He was measured for a tomb, and hoped to get safely into it without asking permission of curé or bishop. He had a singular abhorrence of the ceremonial which the church appointed for the dying. Many passages like the following occur in the letters of these later years:—

To Frederic II. of Prussia: "I do not fear death, which approaches me with long strides, and has already possessed himself of my eyes, my teeth, and my ears; but I have an invincible aversion to the manner in which we die in our holy religion, catholic, apostolic, and Roman. It seems to me extremely ridiculous to get ourselves oiled to go into the other world, as we grease the springs of our carriage for a journey. This folly and all that follows, is so repugnant to me that I am tempted to get myself carried to Nenchâtel to have the pleasure of dying in your house; it had been sweeter to live in it."

To his old friend, Madame du Deffand, he expressed himself very fully on the question, Is life worth living? Her own opinion on the point, as readers are aware, was positive enough. "For my part, monsieur," she once wrote to him, "I avow it, I have but one fixed thought, one sentiment, one chagrin, one misfortune: it is the misery of having been born. There is no part that can be played upon the theatre of the world which I should prefer to non-existence; and yet (what

will seem to you inconsistent), though I were perfectly certain of being about to return to nothingness, I should not have the less horror of death. Explain me to myself." ¹ She often discoursed in this strain. He replied, May 9, 1764:—

"I agree with you that life is very short and sufficiently unhappy; but I must tell you that I have in my house a relation, twenty-three years of age, handsome, well made, vigorous, and this is what happened to him: he fell from his horse one day in hunting, and cut his thigh a little. . . . A trifling incision was made; and there he was, paralyzed for the rest of his days; not paralyzed in a part of his body, but so paralyzed as not to be able to use any of his members, not to lift his head, with the absolute certainty that he could never get the least relief. He has accustomed himself to his condition, and loves life to folly. It is not that annihilation has not something good in it; but I believe it impossible truly to love annihilation, notwithstanding its good qualities. As to death, let us reason a little, I pray you. It is very certain that death is not felt at all; it is not painful for a moment; it is as like sleep as two drops of water. It is only the idea that we shall never wake again which gives us pain; it is the apparatus of death which is horrible,—the barbarity of extreme unction, the cruelty of notifying us that for us all is over. Of what good is it to us to pronounce our sentence? That sentence will be well executed without the notary and the priests taking any trouble about it. It is necessary for us to make our arrangements in good time, and then never to think of it again.

"They say sometimes of a man, 'He died like a dog.' But truly a dog is very happy to die without all that ceremony with which they persecute the last moments of our lives. If they had a little charity for us, they would let us die without saying anything to us about it. The worst is that we are then surrounded by hypocrites, who worry us to make us think as they do not in the least think; or else by imbeciles, who wish that we should be as stupid as they are. All that is very disgusting. The only pleasure of life at Geneva is that people can die there as they like; many worthy persons summon no priests at all. People kill themselves if they please, without any one objecting; or, they await the last moment, and no one troubles them about it."

In this tone he invariably spoke of life and death: he enjoyed life; he never had the slightest fear of death. In showing visitors about his estate, he would point to his church and tomb with evident complacency. An anonymous "letter from

¹ 2 *Lettres de Madame du Deffand*, 462. Paris, 1864.

Ferney" gives part of a conversation that occurred between him and some travelers, as they stood looking at the golden letters of the inscription: DEO EREXIT VOLTAIRE. "That is a fine word between two great names," said one; "but is it the proper term? Should it not have been *dicavit* or *sacravit*?" "No, no!" cried Voltaire, who explained the significance of the word chosen. He then showed his tomb protruding from the wall of the little church. "The wicked will say," he continued, "that I am neither inside nor outside."

CHAPTER XXX.

THE CALAS TRAGEDY.

HITHERTO the enterprise of crushing *l'Infâme* had been conducted in a sportive manner, which appears to have been as amusing to the sportsman as to the spectators. In the events now claiming our attention there was no ingredient of the amusing. We are now to see *l'Infâme*, not ridiculous, but terrific; not uttering foolish words, but doing hideous things.

In the south of France, within sight of the Pyrenees, and not far from midway between the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, is the ancient city of Toulouse, capital of the province of Languedoc, and the seventh city of the kingdom in wealth and importance. It is the chief town of that part of France in which "the famous village of Pompignan" is situated, and where the château of the Le Francs is still shown to curious strangers. Toulouse was one of the most provincial places in Europe; a truly *pagan* city, using that word in its original sense of non-metropolitan. In that age of the Encyclopædia and the Encyclopædists, Toulouse still valued itself upon possessing a wondrous store of "relics," among which were the bodies of seven apostles, the bones of many of the infants slain by Herod, part of the robe of the Virgin Mary, and divers skulls and skeletons of ancient bishops. In Toulouse, such events as the expulsion of the Huguenots and the massacre of St. Bartholomew's day were celebrated every year as occasions of joy and triumph. The news of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes was received there with enthusiasm, and commemorated at the public expense by two frescoes: one representing Louis XIV. holding a cross in his left hand and a drawn sword in his right, with soldiers behind him, forcing Protestants to kneel to images; the other picturing the massacre of St. Bartholomew, in which mothers and children were seen murdered by soldiers, to whom they lifted imploring arms and agonized faces.

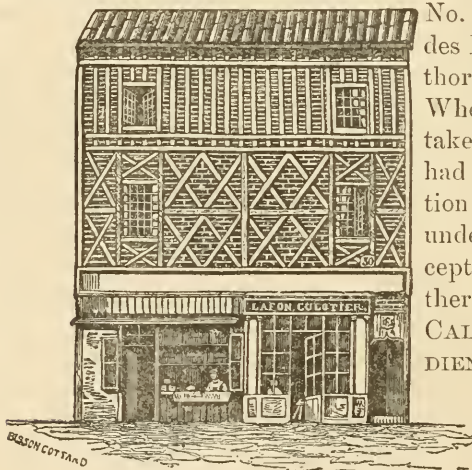
The anniversary of the St. Bartholomew massacre was celebrated as a two days' festival, by processions and solemn services of thanksgiving; the festival having been established by municipal law, and sanctioned by a papal bull. In 1762, the two hundredth anniversary of the massacre, the event was commemorated with unexampled pomp and expense; all ranks and professions participating. The magistrates marched in the procession, wearing robes of silk and gold, made at Lyons for the purpose; Le Franc de Pompignan probably among them, for he had long been a counselor of honor to the Toulouse parliament. It was a ghastly and horrible show. The cobblers' guild carried the head of the first bishop of the city; the roofers bore some of the Herod infants' bones; and every trade had its dirty relics, — so many that there were, it was computed, thirty skeletons carried in all; fit emblem of the murderous deeds committed two centuries before! There were companies of White Penitents, Black Penitents, Gray Penitents; all the orders and grades of the priesthood; knights, nobles, people, — all intent upon showing themselves, by this solemn act, "worthy of their pious ancestors." Worst of all, nearly the whole movable population of the city and its vicinity looked on this shameful procession in admiring sympathy.

There were still a few Protestant families in Toulouse, living there on sufferance, excluded from the more desirable callings. A Protestant could not be a lawyer of any grade, nor hold the smallest municipal office. He could not be a physician, surgeon, printer, bookseller, goldsmith, grocer, or apothecary. A Protestant family could not keep a Protestant servant, and a Protestant business man could not keep a Protestant clerk. A woman, in 1748, was fined three thousand francs for serving as a midwife without having first joined the Roman Catholic communion.¹ The people of the city cherished against the Protestants the antipathy which is so natural to bigoted ignorance; and every time they walked abroad they were reminded by public works of art that the slaughter of Protestants was a pious and holy work. It was but natural that they should attribute to Protestants the same inhuman feelings. The ignorant people of Toulouse believed that

¹ Jean Calas et sa Famille, par A. Coquerel, fils. Paris, 1858. Page 51.
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it was a fixed principle with Protestants to put to death by secret assassination any of their number who should turn Catholic. The assassin, they thought, was chosen in the conclave of the sect, and he was bound, on pain of being killed himself, to execute its bloody decree. An idea of this kind is so congenial to fanatic credulity that we find it often prevailing where there is a small superior class in the midst of a benighted population. Jews, freemasons, Protestants, philosophers, democrats, socialists, have been the occasion of such a belief at different periods and in different countries. M. Coquerel assures us that the belief prevails to-day in Toulouse; and the reason why it prevails, he thinks, is because it is so exquisitely absurd.

This is the picture of a house in Toulouse, still standing,



House of the Calas Family at Toulouse, 1762.¹

No. 50, in La Grand Rue des Filatiers, the principal thoroughfare of the city. When this picture was taken, in 1835, the house had undergone no alteration since the period now under consideration, except that on the sign-board there was then, "JEAN CALAS, MARCHAND D'INDIENNES;" or, as we should say, dealer in dry goods. Jean Calas was one of the few Protestants of Toulouse, where he had been established in business for forty years, and ever maintained an irreproachable character. In 1761 he was sixty-three years of age; a singularly placid, kindly, tolerant, prudent man, not of extraordinary abilities, but one of the gentlest and worthiest of human beings; firmly attached to the reformed church, without the slightest tincture of ill-will toward his Catholic fellow-citizens. His business was not extensive, his whole capital amounting to eighty thousand francs; but he had reared respectably a fam-

¹ From *Jean Calas et sa Famille*, par A. Coquerel, fils. Paris, 1858.

ily of four sons and two daughters, of whom the youngest was a lad fifteen years of age. His wife was superior to himself in vivacity of mind, and her family had remote connections with the ancient nobility of the province. One of the sons had been converted to the Roman Catholic religion some time before. The old man, so far from resenting this, heartily conceded his son's right and sole responsibility in the matter. He was even more liberal to that son than to the rest of his children. He was known to his friends and neighbors as a man free from the intolerant spirit.

The day of doom for this family was October 13, 1761. All had gone as usual in the shop and in the home above it until the evening. The labors of the day were done; the shop was shut; the supper-time of the family was approaching. Several members of the household were absent from home. Louis, the Roman Catholic son, a Toulouse apprentice, was at his master's house, in another street. Donat, the youngest son, was an apprentice at Nismes. The two daughters were at a neighboring village, where they were accustomed to pass a part of every fine season. There were in the house, that evening, the father, aged sixty-three years, and somewhat infirm for his age; the mother, a vigorous and efficient woman of forty-five; a Catholic servant, Jeannette, who had been in the family for twenty-five years, and was devotedly attached to it; Jean-Pierre, the second son, a young man of twenty-five, well disposed, but of little force of character; Marc-Antoine, the eldest son, twenty-eight, of powerful frame and gloomy disposition; and, finally, an accidental guest, Gaubert Lavaysse, a young man from Bordeaux, who had come to visit his parents at Toulouse, before embarking for the West Indies.

Marc-Antoine, the eldest son, was the black sheep of the flock. In youth, he had shown some taste for literature, and was thought to have a talent for oratory. Having an aversion for his father's business, he had studied law, and was prepared to enter the profession, when he was met by the discovery that he could not be admitted to the bar without producing from the curé of his parish a certificate of Catholicity. He tried to gain this certificate by concealing that he was a Protestant. The fact being discovered, he fell into a morose habit, and

wasted his time in billiards and tennis. He was a member of a dramatic company, and was observed to be particularly fond of declaiming passages from the dramatic poets upon suicide. Hamlet's soliloquy on that subject was one of his favorite morsels. His case was the common one of a young man discontented with the homely, honorable lot to which he was born, without possessing qualities that might have enabled him to achieve one more distinguished. Dissolute as he was, he was the only bigot of his family. He was capable of deceit to evade the legal obstacle to his rise; but he was not capable of abjuring a faith which he believed to be essential to salvation. No member of the household but himself had shown resentment at the conversion of his brother Louis.

It was remembered afterwards that he had never been so depressed and silent as during that afternoon and evening. He had made up his mind to destroy himself, and the time had come. He accomplished his purpose with deliberation, and in a way to give the greatest amount of shock and misery to others. He rose from the supper-table about eight o'clock in the evening, and went down-stairs to the shop. He took off his coat, folded it neatly, and laid it upon the counter. He placed a wooden instrument, used in binding bales of cloth, across two door-posts, and to this he hanged himself. He continued to hang unobserved for an hour or more, while the family conversed, after their evening meal, in the pleasant way of French families. The second son, Pierre, even fell asleep in his arm-chair, so quiet, so every way natural and ordinary, was the state of things in the sitting-room. The manner in which the dread discovery was made was related with affecting simplicity by the mother:—

“On the day so unfortunate for us, M. Gaubert Lavaysse arrived from Bordeaux to see his parents, who were at their country house; and, between four and five in the afternoon, while he was looking about to hire a horse to join them, he came to our house, and my husband said to him that, since he could not get away, it would give us pleasure if he would sup with us, to which the young man assented; and he came up to see me in my room, where I was, according to my custom. The first compliments exchanged, he said to me, ‘I am going to sup with you; your husband has invited me!’ I expressed my satisfaction, and I left him some moments to go and give orders to my

servant. In consequence of the invitation, I was obliged also to look for my eldest son, — whom I found seated all alone in the shop, plunged in thought, — to ask him to go and buy some Roquefort cheese: he was usually our purchaser of that article, because he was a better judge of it than the others. I therefore said to him, ‘Come, now, go and buy some Roquefort cheese; here is the money for it, and give the change to your father.’ I went back to my chamber to rejoin the young man whom I had left there. A few moments after, however, he went away, saying that he wished to return to the hay-dealers to see if a horse had not come in, as he meant absolutely to start the next day for his father’s country house; and he went out.

“When my eldest son had bought the cheese, the supper hour having arrived, everybody (including M. Lavaysse, who had come in again) went to the table. During the supper, which was not very long, we talked of indifferent things, and, among others, of the antiquities at the City Hall; and my younger son, Pierre, tried to mention some of them, and his brother interrupted him, because he did not describe them well nor correctly.

“While we were still at the dessert, that unfortunate child [*enfant*] — I mean my eldest son — rose from the table, as his custom was, and went into the kitchen. The servant said to him, ‘Are you cold, Mr. Eldest? [*Monsieur l’Ainé.*] Warm yourself.’ He replied to her, ‘Quite the contrary; I am burning hot;’ and he went out.

“We remained some moments longer at the table, after which we passed into the sitting-room, — M. Lavaysse, my husband, my son, and myself. The first two took seats upon the sofa, my younger son in an arm-chair, and myself in an ordinary chair; and there we conversed together. My younger son went to sleep, and about a quarter to ten M. Lavaysse took leave of us, and we woke my younger son to accompany the said Lavaysse, putting the candle in his hand to light him down; and they descended together.

“But when they had reached the bottom, the instant after, we heard cries of alarm, without distinguishing what was said; upon which, my husband ran down, and I remained, trembling, at the head of the stairs, not daring to descend, not knowing what could be the matter.

“Nevertheless, seeing no one come, I determined to go down, which I did; but I found at the bottom of the staircase M. Lavaysse, of whom I eagerly asked what had happened. He only said that he begged me to go up again, and that I should know; and he so urgently insisted upon my doing so that I went up with him into my room. Doubtless, it was to spare me the pain of seeing my son in that condition; and he went down again. But my uncertainty was too painful to be long borne; I therefore called my servant, and said

to her, 'Jeannette, go and see what is the matter down there. I do not know what has happened; I am all of a tremble.' And I put the candle into her hand, and she descended. Not seeing her come back, I went down myself. But, great God! What was my anguish and my astonishment, when I saw that dear son stretched upon the floor! Nevertheless, I did not believe him dead, and I ran to find some Queen-of-Hungary water, believing he had been taken ill; and, as hope is that which last abandons us, I applied all the possible remedies to recall him to life, not being able to persuade myself that he was dead.

"We all indulged hopes, since the surgeon had been sent for; and he was near me without my seeing him, until he told me that it was useless to do anything more for him, for he was dead. I insisted that it could not be, and begged him to renew his exertions, and to examine him more carefully, which he did, without avail; it was but too true. And during all this time my husband was leaning upon a counter, in utter despair, in such a condition that my heart was torn between the deplorable spectacle of my dead son and the fear of losing that dear husband from the grief to which he entirely abandoned himself, without heeding any consolation; and it was in this state that the officers of justice found us, when they arrested us in our sitting-room, to which we had again ascended."¹

Such was the mother's narrative. One or two other facts will complete the reader's knowledge of what passed within the house on that woful night. After summoning the surgeon, Pierre, the younger son, discovering that his brother had indeed taken his own life, lost his self-possession, and was about to rush into the street, as he said, "to ask advice everywhere." His father called him back, and said to him, "Do not go and spread abroad the report that your brother has made away with himself. Save at least the honor of your miserable family." Pierre promised to obey. He ran out. He went to the billiard saloon frequented by his brother, and asked, with tears in his eyes, if his brother had had a quarrel with any one. He found Lavaysse again, and begged him also to deny the suicide of his brother. The young man consented to do so, desiring to save the family from the shame and loss which suicide involved. Under the ancient laws of the kingdom, a dead man suspected of having taken his own life was put on his trial, as though he were alive, and, if convicted, he was drawn, naked,

¹ Coquerel, page 76.

through the streets on a tumbril, with the face downward, pelted by the populace with mud and stones, and then hung in chains on a gibbet. All his property was confiscated to the king. The afflicted father shrank from the anguish and ignominy of such scenes. It was a natural and most pardonable error, but it was a fatal one.

Passers-by heard the outcry within the house. A few persons gathered about the door. The strange noises continuing, there was soon a considerable crowd of people, whose excitement increased every moment. While they were eagerly pressing about the house, the door was thrown open, and they saw burst from it and rush away a strange young man, in the dress of a gentleman: three-cornered hat, gray coat, red waistcoat, red breeches, and a sword. This was Lavaysse, whose family belonged to the *noblesse* of the bar, and who could therefore wear a sword and gay-colored garments. A moment after, Pierre Calas came out, crazy with fright, who also tore away in wild haste; and when he had brought the surgeon he ran out again, utterly bewildered. Before many minutes had passed, there was a multitude of people about the house, all in a fury of curiosity to know what terrible thing had happened. The rumor quickly spread that it was an affair of sudden death; and soon it began to be reported that the eldest son of the family had been found dead, perhaps murdered! A voice was heard from the midst of the crowd, saying,—

“*Those Huguenots have killed their son to prevent his turning Catholic!*”

Gunpowder is not readier to ignite from a roving spark than those excited provincials were to take fire from such words as those, which harmonized with their habitual feelings concerning Protestants, — feelings kept alive by the annual celebration of the great massacre of 1562. The words were repeated to every new-comer; and the arrival of the police, sent for by the afflicted family, Lavaysse serving as their messenger, confirmed the people in the belief that a fearful crime had been committed. David, one of the eight capitouls or chief magistrates of the city, an infuriate and servile bigot, arrived, ere long, to take charge of the proceedings. He, too, heard the dreadful cry: “*Those Huguenots have killed their son to prevent his turning Catholic!*” and if the words had blazed out upon him across

the midnight sky in letters of miraculous fire he could not have believed them with more complete and instantaneous faith. And it is precisely such beliefs, not received through the reason, that are clung to against reason.

The family, father, mother, son, and servant, with their guest, Lavaysse, and an old friend who had come in on hearing of the catastrophe, were conducted to the Hôtel de Ville, preceded by the corpse upon a bier, already an object of veneration to the people. The family were not yet aware of the awful charge that had been launched against them in the hearing of the crowd, but supposed that they were required only to go to the Hôtel de Ville to give more formal testimony as to what had occurred at their house. They expected to sleep at home that night, and Pierre Calas placed a lighted candle in the entry to give them light on their return. The capitoul David "smiled," it is said, "at their simplicity," and ordered the candle to be put out, saying, "They will not come back so soon." The march to the Hôtel de Ville was like a midnight funeral. The body upon its bier was followed by the family, by the magistrates, forty of the city guard, and a great number of people. No one seems to have had any doubt of the guilt of the prisoners. To one of the less excited magistrates, who advised more caution in the proceedings, David replied, "I take the whole responsibility upon myself." He kept repeating, "This is an affair of religion."

It was past midnight when the cortege reached the Hôtel de Ville. The prisoners, not yet realizing their situation, all concealed the fact that the deceased had taken his own life. It was a device the most maladroit; for if he had not killed himself, who could have killed him? There was the rope, and there was the livid circle around his neck, which that rope had made. If he had not hanged himself, he must have been strangled by the united exertions of the family. That natural and venial falsehood of theirs was a kind of confession of their own guilt; it was accepted as such by the excited people of Toulouse, trained from infancy to *believe*, forbidden always to question. After a brief preliminary examination, the prisoners were all committed to close and solitary confinement in the cells of the building. Those assigned to the father and mother were windowless dungeons. The corpse was placed

for safe-keeping in the torture-chamber, and the next day was embalmed. On following days, when each of the prisoners was examined separately upon oath, the fiction of their finding Mare-Antoine strangled upon the floor was abandoned, and each of them related the events of the evening exactly as they had occurred. Their depositions, which were as natural, as simple, and as probable as the narrative of the mother given above, were also in perfect accord upon material points, and would have carried instant conviction to minds not debauched and blinded by *l'Infâme*.

The next morning all Toulouse heard of these events, and the news quickly spread over the province. What did the people hear? They heard that a family of Protestants had killed their eldest son to prevent his turning Catholic, — according to the well-known custom of Protestants in such cases! Mare-Antoine Calas was at once accepted as a martyr. In this condition of the provincial mind, the capitoul David played a part congenial to his limited and ferocious nature. He inflamed the popular fury by every means in his power, and the clergy, without one known exception, eagerly seconded his endeavors. It was through his influence that, when the body of the suicide had lain three weeks in the torture-room, it was borne to the grave with more than royal pomp. A Sunday afternoon was appointed for the burial, a time when the whole population was at leisure. An immense procession, headed by more than forty priests, accompanied the corpse from the Hôtel de Ville to the cathedral; the White Penitents conspicuous in the procession, bearing candles and the banner of their order. One of the wild fictions current in the city was that the dead man had been upon the point of joining these White Penitents. A vast concourse filled the cathedral to witness the funeral service.

Some days after, the White Penitents held in their chapel a hideous solemnity for the repose of the suicide's soul, in which the other religious orders participated by delegations. The church was hung with white cloth, and in the middle of it a lofty catafalque was erected, also draped in white, on the summit of which was set up a hired skeleton, in a standing posture; holding in one hand a branch of palm, emblem of martyrdom, and in the other an inscription in large letters,

“ABJURATION OF HERESY.” At the feet of the skeleton was the name of the “martyr,” Marc-Antoine Calas. A second service of the same character was held in the chapel of another order, a few days after.¹

For three successive Sundays, in October and November, 1761, an admonition or menace (*monitoire*) was read in all the churches of Toulouse, which notified the people precisely what testimony was needed by the public prosecutors to convict the family. By this document all persons were threatened with dire penalty who had knowledge of the affair and failed to come forward and testify. This solemn denunciation was particularly directed —

(1.) “Against all those who know, by hearsay or otherwise, that Marc-Antoine Calas had renounced the religion pretending to be reformed, in which he was educated; that he had attended the ceremonies of the Roman Catholic church; that he had presented himself at the sacrament of penitence; and that he was to make a public abjuration after the 13th of the present month of October. Also, to all those to whom Marc-Antoine Calas had communicated his intention.

(2.) “Against all those who know, by hearsay or otherwise, that, on account of this change of belief, the Sieur Marc-Antoine Calas was threatened, maltreated, and regarded with an evil eye in his house; that the person who threatened him told him that, if he made a public abjuration, he would have no other executioner than himself.

(3.) “Against all those who know, by hearsay or otherwise, that a woman, reputed to be attached to heresy, urged on her husband to such menaces, and herself threatened Marc-Antoine Calas.

(4.) “Against all those who know, by hearsay or otherwise, that, on the 13th of the present month, in the morning, a council was held in a house of the parish of La Danrade, at which the death of Marc-Antoine Calas was resolved upon or advised; and to those who, on the same morning, saw a certain number of the said persons enter or leave the said house.

(5.) “Against all those who know, by hearsay or otherwise, that, on the same day, the 13th of the month of October, between sunset and near ten o’clock, that execrable resolve was carried out by forcing Marc-Antoine Calas to his knees; who, by surprise or by force, was strangled or hung with a rope with two knots, — one to strangle, and the other to be fastened to the billet of wood used for binding

¹ Jean Calas et sa Famille, 113.

bales of cloth, by means of which Marc-Antoine Calas was strangled and put to death, either by suspension or by twisting.

(6.) "Against all those who heard a voice crying for help against the assassin; and, afterwards, '*Ah, my God! What have I done to you? Have mercy on me!*' The same voice having then become plaintive, and saying, '*Ah, my God! Ah, my God!*'"

(7.) "Against all those to whom Marc-Antoine Calas communicated the inquietudes which he experienced in his house, which rendered him sad and melancholy.

(8.) "Against all those who know that there arrived from Bordeaux, the evening before the 13th, a young man of that city, who, not finding horses to join his family at their country house, was invited to supper in the house, was present, consenting to or participating in the act.

(9.) "Against all those who know, by hearsay or otherwise, who are the authors, accomplices, abettors, favorers, of this crime, which was one of the most detestable."

Testimony of the kind desired, "by hearsay or otherwise," could not be wanting in the frenzied Toulouse of the autumn of 1761. A barber's assistant of the neighborhood told his companions that, while passing the house on the fatal evening, he had heard Marc-Antoine cry out, "*Ah, mon Dieu, they are strangling me! Ah, mon Dieu, they are assassinating me!*" One of his comrades understood the words to be, "*Ah, father, you are strangling me!*" Probably, the lad said these things merely to make himself of consequence during a period of excitement. When the trial came, he had disappeared from the city, and could not be found, a circumstance that was of overwhelming weight against the accused. Several witnesses testified to having heard passers-by say that they had heard similar outeries; such as, "*Ah, father, you are killing me! Have pity upon me! Let me say a prayer!*" and others. Hearsay testimony seems to have been regarded by the Toulouse parliament, that tried the case, as of equal weight with the testimony of eye-witnesses. A priest, for example, deposed thus: "*Some one, whose name I cannot recall, assured me that he had been told by the wig-maker, Durand, who lives in the great street near the house of the Sieur Calas, that his assistant, having gone out into the street, heard the cries and pleadings, very nearly as reported in the *monitoire*; and I believe he saw appear from the door of the said Sieur Calas a young man,*

having in his hand a sword, and looking to the right and to the left."

This is a fair specimen of the testimony bearing against the accused. The probabilities and facts spoke for them plainly enough, and there was no evidence against them which an enlightened and dispassionate judge would have admitted. The winter was spent in laborious proceedings; and, after all, some of the most obvious precautions and inquiries were omitted. It was assumed that the deceased *could* not have hanged himself in the place where he was found; but, to the last, this assumption was not put to the test of an inspection of the premises by those who were to pronounce on the case. The bar was so intimidated that the prisoners had no efficient defense, and only one member of the parliament preserved his judgment unimpaired. Absurd inconsistency marked every stage of the trial to the very end. If Marc-Antoine was strangled, the deed must have been done by the two young men, aided and abetted by the parents and by the servant, who was an unusually devout Catholic. The court, however, determined to decide first upon the guilt of the father, in the expectation of extorting a confession from him, under torture, which would inculpate the rest.

Thirteen members of the parliament of Toulouse tried this cause. After holding ten long sessions, debating and comparing the testimony, they came to a vote. One man alone gave his voice for unconditional acquittal. Two were of opinion that, before deciding the case, the court ought to satisfy itself beyond doubt whether it was a *possible* thing for the deceased to have hanged himself with the cord and billet produced, in the door-way specified. Three voted for the subjection of the old man to torture, reserving the sentence of death until he had confessed his guilt. Seven voted for death. By the old law, a bare majority did not suffice for a capital sentence. After another prolonged discussion, the oldest member of the court changed his opinion; and thus, by eight votes to five, Jean Calas was doomed to torture and death upon the wheel.

In one particular the ancient laws were more merciful than ours: they did not add the misery of long anticipation to the anguish of death. Jean Calas was sentenced March 9, 1762, and the sentence was executed the next day.

We ought not to shrink from the contemplation of the agony which *l'Infâme* has inflicted, because man is still man, and what man has done to man he can do again. Fanatic magistrates and priests could not have done such things, if there had not been behind them a preponderance of credulous people, who would have done the same, or worse, if they had been in authority. It was Toulouse, it was imperfectly developed man, it was man the Believer, that blasted this innocent family; and we must not therefore turn away our eyes from the spectacle of their anguish. For five months the whole family, including their Catholic servant and their guest, Lavaysse, had been confined in separate dungeons, heavily chained by the feet. On the morning of March 10th, the irons were removed from the father, who was then conducted to the court-room, where, in presence of the magistrates, his long sentence was read to him. He was taken thence to the torture-room, accompanied by the same magistrates, and placed in readiness to undergo the *question ordinaire*. He was warned and exhorted to confess his crimes and to reveal his accomplices; the oath was administered to him; he swore to tell the truth; and the magistrates, after warning and exhorting him again, left him to suffer. In sight of the rack, clad only in a pair of linen drawers, but not yet subjected to the torture, he was questioned concerning all the events of the fatal evening. His answers, which were recorded by a clerk, were, in all respects, consistent with his statement given many times before. Being asked, finally, to name his accomplices, he replied that, as no crime had been committed, he could have had none.

The executioner then reported his "contumacy" to the magistrates in their chamber, whereupon he and his assistants took an oath upon a crucifix to administer the torture in strict conformity with law and usage. The *question ordinaire* consisted in stretching the body until all the limbs were drawn from their sockets. This virtuous old man, good citizen and good father, gentlest and kindest of men, was treated very much as that malefactor was treated whom John Evelyn saw tortured in Paris in the previous century.¹ They first bound him by the wrists to an iron ring in the solid stone wall, four feet from the ground, and his feet to another ring in the floor

¹ Memoirs of John Evelyn, page 210. New York, 1870.

of the room, with an ample length of rope between his feet and the ring. While he hung thus aslant, in acute pain, the pull was increased tenfold by sliding under the lower rope a wooden horse. Every limb was instantly dislocated, and the body was drawn out beyond its natural length several inches. Being questioned again, he adhered to his former answers. Next, a taller horse was thrust under the rope, which had the effect of drawing him out to a frightful length, and increasing the anguish to the utmost that could be borne. He did not waver nor cry out, but calmly replied that no one had committed a crime in his house that night.

This ended the *question ordinaire*. He was allowed a rest of half an hour, during which he was again exhorted by the magistrates to tell the truth, as well as by two celebrated preachers, one styled the royal doctor of the University, and the other professor of theology. He was next applied to the *question extraordinaire*, a masterpiece of combined indignity and anguish. They laid this father, of sixty-four honorable, innocent years, upon a table, on his back, with his head extended a little beyond the end of it; and while he was thus extended one man held his nose, and another poured slowly into his mouth, from a horn, three pints of water. The man holding the nose occasionally loosened his hold a little, to allow the victim to take breath. With only a moment's pause between each, five such vessels of water were poured slowly into his mouth, until his body was visibly swollen, and the sufferer endured the anguish of a hundred drownings. There was then a pause, during which he was once more questioned, and once more asserted his innocence. Five more horns full of water, of about three pints' capacity, were poured into his mouth, swelling his body to more than twice its natural size. Questioned again, he again denied the charge. He was then released, restoratives were given him, and he was handed over to the two priests, to be prepared by them for death.

He was next placed upon the tumbril, wearing only a shirt, and began the long journey to the place of execution, beheld by thousands of people as he was carried slowly by. "I am innocent," he said, from time to time. Before the great gate of the cathedral the procession halted. The old man was required to dismount as best he could, kneel down, and go

through some form of asking forgiveness "of God and the king" for what he had not done. He reached the scaffold, at length. As he was about to ascend, a priest whom he had known exhorted him to confess. "What, father!" said he; "you too believe, then, that a man can kill his own son?" They bound him to a wooden cross that lay upon the scaffold, and the executioner, with an iron bar, broke each of his limbs in two places, striking eleven blows in all, and then left him for two hours to die, if he could. He lived the two hours. During that time he spoke only words of charity and compassion. He prayed for his judges, clearly discerning that they, too, knew not what they did. A few moments before the end, being again exhorted by the priest to avow the truth, he said, —

"I have spoken it. I die innocent. Jesus Christ, who was innocence itself, was willing to die for me by a punishment still more cruel. I do not regret a life the termination of which, I hope, will lead me to eternal happiness. I pity my wife and my son; but that visitor, that son of M. Lavaysse, to whom I thought merely to show politeness by inviting him to supper, — ah, it is he who still increases my sorrow!"

The capitoul David, furious to see his victim escaping him without confession, cried out, "Wretch! Look at the fire there which is about to reduce your body to ashes; speak the truth!" Jean Calas turned aside his head, and the executioner put an end to his sufferings by strangling him. His body was bound to the stake and burned.

His heroic persistence in asserting his innocence and the innocence of his family saved their lives. Further proceedings against them were stayed. The mother was set at liberty, after some delay. The two daughters were consigned to a convent. Pierre, frightened into pretending to abjure his religion, was set at liberty, also. Lavaysse was restored to his family, broken in health, and, as it seemed, hopelessly dishonored. The servant found temporary refuge in a convent. The property of the family was wasted and plundered, and, if any remained, it was confiscated to the king. The stricken mother, bereft of husband, children, home, and hope, crept into retirement near Toulouse, and was seen there no more. The people of Toulouse, and the people generally in the south of

France, remained fully persuaded that this family had murdered their eldest son to prevent his joining the true church.

Even young Donat Calas, apprenticed to a manufacturer at Nismes, a hundred and fifty miles distant, was enveloped in the ruin of his family. When the news reached Nismes of the dreadful events of October, his friends advised him to get beyond the boundaries of France, lest he should be summoned to Toulouse as a witness or an accomplice. He went to Geneva, and was living there when his father was executed. Terror seized the Protestant families of the southern provinces, many of whom sold their possessions, and sought safety in Switzerland also. It wanted little to provoke another exodus of Protestants from France, like that which had occurred after the revocation of the tolerant edict of Henry IV.

CHAPTER XXXI.

VOLTAIRE INTERFERES.

A MERCHANT of Marseilles, Dominique Audibert by name, chanced to be in Toulouse, on a journey northward, during the last days of the life of Jean Calas, and probably witnessed some of the closing scenes of the tragedy. He was a man of intelligence, of an educated family, a member of the Academy of Marseilles; and therefore, upon inquiring into the case, he was satisfied that the family was innocent. Pursuing his journey, he reached Geneva, and called upon Voltaire to make known to him these horrible events. Voltaire himself has related the impression which M. Audibert's narrative made upon him: —

“Near the end of March, 1762, a traveler who had passed through Languedoc, and who came to my retreat, two leagues from Geneva, informed me of the execution of Calas, and assured me that he was innocent. I replied to him that his crime was not probable; but it was still less probable that disinterested judges should have condemned an innocent man to be broken upon the wheel.

“I learned the next day that one of the children of that unfortunate father had fled into Switzerland, not far from my house. His flight made me presume that the family was guilty. Nevertheless, I reflected that the father had been condemned to death for having slain his son for the sake of religion, and that that father was sixty-nine years old.¹ I do not remember ever to have read that any old man had been possessed by so horrible a fanaticism. I had always remarked that that mania usually attacked only young people, whose imagination, ardent, tumultuous, and feeble, becomes inflamed by superstition.

“I sent for young Calas. I expected to see a fierce zealot, such as his province has sometimes produced. I saw a child, simple, ingenuous, of a countenance the most amiable and interesting, and who in speaking to me made useless efforts to restrain his tears. He told me that he was living at Nismes, an apprentice to a manufacturer, when

¹ Sixty-four.

the public voice informed him that all his family at Toulouse were about to be condemned to death. He said that almost all Languedoc believed them guilty, and that, in order to escape from such frightful opprobrium, he had come to conceal himself in Switzerland.

“I asked him if his father and mother were of a violent character. He told me that they had never beaten one of their children, and that there were no parents more indulgent and more tender.

“I confess that little more was necessary to make me strongly presume the innocence of the family. I sought additional information from two merchants of Geneva, of well-known probity, who had lodged at Toulouse in the house of the Calas family. They confirmed me in my opinion. Far from believing the family fanatic and parricidal, I thought I saw that it was fanatics who had accused and ruined them. I knew long ago of what party spirit and calumny are capable.

“But what was my astonishment when, having written to Languedoc concerning this strange event, both Catholics and Protestants replied to me that the guilt of the family was beyond reasonable doubt! I was not convinced. I took the liberty to write to those who had governed the province, to commandants of neighboring provinces, to ministers of state, who advised me unanimously not to mingle in so bad a business. All the world condemned me, and I persisted. This is what I did:—

“The widow of Calas, from whom, as a climax of misery and outrage, they had taken away her daughters, had retired to solitude, where she was nourished upon her tears, and waited for death. I did not inquire if she was attached or not to the Protestant religion, but only if she believed in a God, a rewarder of virtue and an avenger of crime. I caused her to be asked if she would declare in the name of God that her husband had died innocent. She did not hesitate. I hesitated no more.”¹

It was the narrative of Madame Calas, given above, which removed the last doubt from his mind. That narrative ended thus: “This is the affair, just as it passed, word for word; and I pray God, who knows our innocence, to punish me eternally if I have augmented or diminished an iota, and if I have not spoken the pure truth concerning all these circumstances. I am ready to seal this truth with my blood.” He had been diligently investigating the case a month when this letter was forwarded to him, and during that period he was sure only that an appalling crime had been committed in Toulouse: perhaps,

¹ Voltaire to Damilville, March 1, 1765. 38 Œuvres de Voltaire, 384.

by the Calas family; perhaps, by the magistrates; certainly, by *l'Infâme!* With exacter truth he afterwards described the criminal to be "Human Nature." As soon as he had read the affecting letter of the stricken mother, he was prepared to act.

The appeal from the province is to the metropolis; and he at once accepted the duty of initiating and conducting that appeal. His letters of the spring of 1762 show the hold this awful business had taken of him. To the Cardinal de Bernis, March 25th (a day or two after hearing the story from M. Audibert): "Shall I dare entreat your Eminence to be so good as to tell me what I am to think of the frightful affair of this Calas, broken on the wheel at Toulouse for having hanged his son? . . . It lies heavy on my heart; it saddens me in my pleasures; it spoils them." To D'Argental, March 27th: "You will ask me, perhaps, my divine angels, why I interest myself so strongly in this Calas, who has been broken on the wheel? It is because I am a man; it is because I see all foreigners indignant; it is because all your Swiss Protestant officers say that they will not fight heartily for a nation which breaks their brethren on the wheel without any proof. . . . Could you not induce M. de Choiseul to have this fearful event investigated, which dishonors human nature, whether Calas is guilty or innocent?" To D'Argental, June 4th: "On my knees I implore you to investigate the case. Speak of it to M. de Choiseul; it is easy to learn the truth from M. de Saint-Florentin [his colleague in the ministry], and in my opinion that truth concerns the human race."

Such were his feelings. He executed his purpose of rehabilitating the family as a man conducts a cause upon the issue of which depend his whole estate, his good name, and the future of his children. While he was still annotating Corneille, writing the Russian Peter, laying out his park and plantations, he devoted himself to this new task, as though he had no other object or hope in life. Donat Calas he took into his family, and, in order to be nearer Geneva, he went back for a while to Les Délices, leaving his beloved farms and garden, his church and tomb, not yet completed. He was closeted often with an able advocate of Geneva, M. Végobre, still an honored and familiar name there, from whom he obtained the legal points involved and a statement of the steps to be taken.

He induced a merchant of Montauban, Ribotte-Charon by name, — a man of letters, vehemently interested in the case, — to go to Toulouse, and personally investigate the facts and inspect the localities. He employed M. Chazel, a solicitor of Montpellier, an important city of Languedoc, to address the leading magistrates and other officials of the province, asking for copies of the documents and testimony. M. Chazel informed him that the official circles of Languedoc were dumb with terror. “No well-informed person dares speak out. The magistrates, who are bound to exhibit the truth to the light of day, remain obstinately silent, and their silence embarrasses both the friends and the enemies of the Calas family.” He soon discovered that there was no hope of remedial action from the perpetrators of the iniquity.

Other tactics were obviously necessary. There chanced to be then living at Geneva, for consultation with Dr. Tronchin, a French lady of distinction, connected by birth and marriage with the most important families in the kingdom. This was the Duchess of Enville, a frequenter of Voltaire’s house and theatre. He fired her with something of his own burning zeal, and she wrote many letters on the case to her friends at court and in the ministry. The minister most concerned with internal affairs of this nature was the chancellor, Count of Saint-Florentin. Voltaire caused him to be assailed on every side and from every quarter. The Duchess of Enville, the Duke of Richelieu, and the Duke of Villars wrote to him, entreating him to order an investigation; while Voltaire himself wrote to M. Ménéard, the same minister’s first clerk, and to M. Chaban, his confidential adviser. Dr. Tronchin, too, was stirred up by him to write to some of his illustrious patients, who had the ear of M. de Saint-Florentin. He was far from neglecting M. de Choiseul and Madame de Pompadour; but, as they were “philosophers” at heart, he knew that, when the time came, he could count upon their zealous coöperation. Meanwhile, he ascertained the situation and circumstances of each member of the ruined family. Louis Calas came from his convent to Geneva. The widow, a woman of great worth and dignity, he induced to take up her abode in Paris, where he provided for her a safe retreat, placed her in charge of the D’Argentals, and employed in her cause two of the most dis-

tinguished advocates of the kingdom. After many months, her daughters were enabled by him to join her there. The expense of all these operations he took upon himself, and paid everybody from his own purse, until he had set flowing in upon the family abundant streams from the benevolence of Europe.

Meanwhile, he was preparing to bring to the support of sympathizing ministers and judges an irresistible public opinion. First, he published a pamphlet, one of the most affecting and ingenious ever composed, which he entitled "Original Documents concerning the Death of the Sieurs Calas, and the Judgment rendered at Toulouse." These documents were four in number: first, the Narrative of Madame Calas, already given in these pages; second, a Letter purporting to be written by young Donat Calas to his mother, relating his flight from Nismes to Geneva, and urging her to consecrate her life to the restoration of the good name of the family; third, an Appeal from Donat Calas to the public on behalf of his father, mother, and brother, relating the whole case, with notes and elucidations; and, finally, a Declaration by Pierre Calas, narrating with simplicity the events of the case as witnessed by himself. All of these pieces, except the letter of Madame Calas, were rewritten by Voltaire, who knew his art too well not to adhere closely to the story as related to himself by the two young men. The notes were chiefly composed of anecdotes and incidents of the suicide, the trial, the execution, and the subsequent scenes, such as were best calculated to convey an impression of the artless innocence of the family. No well-disposed person can even now read this pamphlet without strong emotion. "Persist, then, my mother," Donat concludes, "in your enterprise. Never mind our fortune. We are five children without bread; but we all have honor, and, like you, we prefer it to our life. I throw myself at your feet; I bathe them with my tears; I ask your benediction with a respect which your woes augment."

There was no allusion in this pamphlet to Voltaire or to any of his friends. The reader saw in it simply the shattered household: a mother, two young daughters, and two young sons, robbed of father, home, estate, and good name; driven from their native province; blameless, and lifting up their hands to their country in appeal from the delirium of a benighted province.

He followed this masterpiece of art and truth with another pamphlet, entitled "History of Elizabeth Canning and of the Calas Family," written in the tone of an independent witness, who, by chance, had obtained some light upon a matter of public interest. It began in an enticing manner: "I was in London in 1753, when the affair of young Elizabeth Canning made so much noise." This was a case in which circumstantial testimony, given under the influence of terror, came near bringing to the gallows nine innocent persons. The story brought home the familiar truth that "whoever has lied will generally lie again, for fear of being thought a liar." A history of the Calas affair followed, in which this truth was ingeniously illustrated, and the "obstinate silence" of the magistrates of Toulouse was explained and parried.

All this was but preliminary; it was intended to create a public interest in the family, which would compel attention to the case on the part of the government. As soon as Madame Calas was established in her abode at Paris, he sent her a letter of introduction to a young advocate, Elie de Beaumont; not yet known to general fame, but of good repute in the circle of philosophers. This note of introduction, of June 11, 1762, may serve to show how thoroughly Voltaire executed every detail of the business: —

"I present to you, monsieur, the most unfortunate of all women, who asks the thing in the world which is most just. Inform me, I pray you, at once, what measures can be taken. I charge myself with the recompense; I am only too glad to bestow it upon talent so brilliant as yours. This case, besides being so strange and so important, can bring you infinite honor; and, in your noble profession, honor leads sooner or later to fortune. This affair, in which I take the most intense interest, is so extraordinary that it will be necessary to employ extraordinary means. Rest assured that the parliament of Toulouse will supply no weapons against itself; it has forbidden the communication of the documents to any one, and even an extract from the sentence. There is only one influence [*protection*] great enough to obtain from the chancellor [Saint-Florentin] or from the king an order to send a copy of the record. We are seeking that influence: the *cry of the public*, indignant and compassionate, must procure it. It is to the interest of the state to discover on which side is the most horrible fanaticism. I do not doubt that this enterprise appears to you extremely important; I entreat you to speak of it to the magistrates and

jurists of your acquaintance, and induce them to speak to the chancellor. Let us try to excite his compassion and his sense of justice; after which you will enjoy the glory of having been the avenger of innocence, and of having warned judges that they cannot with impunity trifle with the blood of human beings. Oh, cruel men! They forgot that they were human! Oh, the barbarians!"

He had chosen well his man. Elie de Beaumont conducted the cause with a skill worthy of it. In September he was ready with his first *Mémoire*, or statement of the facts, which remains to this day one of the classics of the French advocate's library. He demonstrated, by the unquestioned facts of the case, "three impossibilities" in the way of the murder of the young man by the family. "I add a fourth impossibility," wrote Voltaire to the young lawyer: "it is that of resisting your arguments. I join my gratitude to that which the family owe you. I venture to say that the judges of Toulouse owe you gratitude also, for you have enlightened them upon their faults."

Mischief is often done quickly; it is usually undone slowly. In this case, as frequently happens, the men who alone could begin the remedial work were of the same temper as those who had done the wrong. The king and his family, the chancellor, several of the judges, cherished the prejudices so congenial to dull minds; and their organ, Fréron, pursued his profitable vocation of flattering these prejudices. Fréron, from first to last, justified Voltaire's antipathy by siding against the Calas family. It was found impossible for some weeks to get a license for the printing of Elie de Beaumont's *Mémoire*. Copies were procured from Geneva and Holland, and the success of the piece with the public was unexampled.

Voltaire resorted to the expedient of bringing to bear upon the stolid people of Versailles the public opinion of foreign countries. His Calas pamphlets (seven in all) were translated and published in England and Germany, where they produced a profound and universal effect. The English, who still knew how to give, if not how to behave, nobly exercised their gift of giving on this occasion. The subscription for the Calas family was headed by the young queen of George III., a shining personage then, who had just bestowed upon her new country an heir to the throne. The Archbishop of Canterbury fol-

lowed. Ten of the other bishops subscribed, as well as "seventy-nine lords and forty-seven gentlemen," whose names were printed at the beginning of one of the later pamphlets of Voltaire. Several German princes and nobles subscribed; the Swiss people helped; and gifts came in from almost all the Protestant communities. The Empress of Russia and the King of Poland contributed. The expense of maintaining five persons, and of conducting litigation so difficult and prolonged, was becoming very great, and these golden gifts were welcome. But their best effect was in dissolving the prejudices of the court, and interesting its pride on behalf of the Calas family.

These measures were seconded by the firm and dignified demeanor of Madame Calas and the engaging manners of her daughters. During the following winter, it was reckoned a favor and a distinction to be admitted to their presence; they visited a few important persons, and received many more at the house of the D'Argentals. All the world smiled upon them, and every one seemed impatient for the king's council to take the first step. No power but that of the royal council could annul the decree of a parliament, or compel the surrender of its record.

The important day came at length. The council was called to meet at Versailles March 7, 1763, three days before the first anniversary of Jean Calas's agony and death. It was to pronounce, first, upon the requisition of the family for a re-opening of the case and a new trial by a metropolitan court; secondly, if this were granted, it was expected to order the magistrates of Toulouse to produce the record of the trial, sentence, and execution, with all the documents relating thereto. We have a very simple and pleasing narrative of the events of that day at Versailles, written the morning after by an eye-witness, — probably, as M. Coquerel conjectures, by young Lavaysse, the companion of the family in their ruin and in their restoration: —

"The affair of Madame Calas was decided yesterday at the council. I was with her at Versailles, with several other gentlemen, at the houses of ministers, and the reception which they gave her was most favorable. Nowhere was she kept waiting; as soon as she presented herself, both leaves of the doors flew open, and every one offered his

best consolation. The chancellor said to her, 'Your affair is one of the most interesting, madame; we sympathize with your situation; we heartily wish that you may find among us comfort in your affliction.' The welcome given her by the Duke of Praslin was most gracious. She went to the gallery with her daughters to see the king pass, where she was accosted by several lords. The Duke of A. and the Count of Noailles, who were of the number, promised to call the attention of the king to her. They selected her place, but their good intention had no effect; for, just as the king came in sight of her, a member of his suite fell, and by his fall drew away the attention of the court and king. All this occurred on Sunday.

"Monday morning, Madame Calas, toward nine o'clock, constituted herself a prisoner. Everything was in readiness; the papers were dated, signed, and carried to the manager of the cause. The young ladies went to the council-room to present themselves to their judges. The number of councilors present was prodigious, and the attendance of the ministers rendered the assembly still more brilliant. The requisition [to annul] was admitted with one voice. The documents and records were ordered to be brought [from Toulouse]. The advocate did not dare to ask for the originals of the procedure, for there was reason to believe that they would be refused, though I do not think that that would have made any difference.

"The elder of the young ladies was taken ill during the session of the council; she had a fainting fit, which was very severe and of long duration. She had not yet recovered when those gentlemen, having left the council room, came to announce to her the success of their endeavors. Some of them strove to give her remedies, — spirituous liquors, salts; flasks of every kind were eagerly offered. The charity of those gentlemen was not confined to Mademoiselle Calas; they were eager to obtain the formal discharge of Madame Calas. It plainly appeared in their conduct how deeply they felt the unhappiness of that family, and how indignant they were at the injustice which had been done them.

"The discharge having been pronounced, we conducted Madame Calas from prison, where she was seated upon a large couch, near a good fire. The jailer had caused to be served to her in the morning coffee, chocolate, and broth, according to the orders he had received; but we were much surprised at the noble answer he made when he was asked how much we had to pay. 'Madame Calas,' said he, 'is too severely afflicted for me to be willing to take anything from her. I wish it were in my power to render her services more agreeable; for no one respects her more than I do.' What a contrast to the people of Toulouse! The servants of all her judges and of all her protectors

regard her with admiration and respect. There is not one of them who has not read all the documents relating to her cause."¹

Voltaire had waited long for this auspicious beginning of success, and there was nothing in which he was so little proficient as the art of waiting. "My dear brother," he wrote to Damilaville, "there is, then, justice upon the earth! There is, then, such a thing as humanity! Men are not all wicked rascals, as they say! It is the day of your triumph, my dear brother; you have served the family better than any one!" To all the advocates and friends who had given aid in the cause he poured out heartiest thanks and congratulations. If he gave the warmest praise to Damilaville, it was because of the peculiar fervor of his zeal, in which he seems to have surpassed all the "brethren." Damilaville, who began his career as an officer of the king's guard, was now first clerk in one of the tax-bureaus, an office which gave him the right to send parcels free of expense. He had used this privilege on behalf of Voltaire and his friends, which led to an intimacy with the lord of Ferney that increased in warmth until the death of Damilaville, in 1768. He is remembered only from his connection with Voltaire, whose letters bear testimony to his burning zeal in crushing *l'Infâme*. Others of the "brethren" had various objects and interests; Damilaville appears to have lived for this alone.

Upon receiving the glad tidings of the council's unanimous decision in favor of Madame Calas, Voltaire naturally concluded that the cause was substantially won. His patience was subjected to a very long trial. May arrived before the magistrates of Toulouse obeyed the order of the council. A new trial was ordered at Paris. Delay followed delay. There were new Mémoires, new pamphlets, new measures. At length, March 9, 1765, exactly three years after the sentence of Jean Calas was pronounced, that sentence was annulled; the good name of the father was restored; the accused family, their guest and their servant, were declared innocent; the confiscation of the estate was canceled: and all this was done by the unanimous decree of a numerous and distinguished court, with the heart-felt applause of enlightened Europe.

Many loyal hands made haste to send the particulars of the

¹ Jean Calas et sa Famille, par A. Coquerel, fils. Paris, 1858. Page 264.

glorious result to Ferney. Donat Calas was in Voltaire's room when the courier arrived with the precious packet of letters: one from Madame Calas herself, one from D'Argental, one from Elie de Beaumont, and several others. "We shed tears of emotion, little Calas and I," he wrote to D'Argental. "My old eyes furnished as many as his. We choked, my dear angels. It is philosophy alone that has won the victory. When will it be able to crush all the heads of this hydra?"

To his old friend Cideville, who was in Paris when the trial closed so happily, he wrote, "It was, to my fancy, the finest fifth act the stage has ever presented."

He did not yet feel that his triumph was complete. The family came out of court "rehabilitated," indeed, but penniless. The law expenses had amounted to more than fifty thousand francs; the support of the family had cost a large sum; there had been many expensive journeys; and thus the subscriptions, liberal as they had been, were all consumed. "The queen," wrote Voltaire to Damilaville, "has drunk the health of Madame Calas, but has not given her anything to drink." The fault was in part repaired. The judges who had tried the cause united in "imploping for the family the bounty of the king, whose paternal heart will be touched by their situation." The vice-chancellor, Maupeou, replied, on the king's behalf, that his majesty "had been pleased to cast upon them a favorable regard, and accorded to the widow a gratification of twelve thousand francs; to each of her daughters six thousand; three thousand to her sons; three thousand to her servant; and six thousand toward the expenses incurred." The vice-chancellor sent for the family, and made known to them the king's benevolence. They asked him if the king objected to their suing the magistrates of Toulouse for damages. He advised them to consult their friends and counsel on the point; they sought Voltaire's opinion. He said, in substance, Let well enough alone; and they took his advice. The capitoul David, who had been chiefly instrumental in bringing all these woes upon an innocent household, was deprived of his office in February, 1765; soon after, he lost his reason, threw himself out of a window, and so ended his life.

The king's bounty proving inadequate, the friends of the family entered warmly into a project for improving their circum-

stances. An engraving was made, representing Madame Calas, her daughters, her sons, her servant, and her guest in prison at Paris, awaiting the judgment of the court. The six-franc subscriptions poured in. Voltaire subscribed for twelve copies, and kept one of them hanging above his bed as long as he lived. The Duchess of Enville subscribed for one copy, and sent fifty louis to pay for it. The Duke of Choiseul paid a hundred louis for two copies. Princesses and duchesses gave their names and louis-d'or freely, and the public were following their example with generous enthusiasm, when the capricious *régime* spoiled the good work by suspending the "privilege." Baron Grimm reports that the reasons of this suspension, as given by "one of the first magistrates of the kingdom," were three in number: (1) the project of the engraving appeared to have been "instigated" by Voltaire; (2) the engraving would perpetuate the obloquy of the Toulouse parliament; (3) it was for the benefit of Protestants. After months of delay, during which the enthusiasm to subscribe had time to cool, the privilege was restored, and a considerable sum was raised.

Madame Calas and her daughters continued to live in Paris; her two sons settled in Geneva. She visited the young men in 1770, accompanied by Lavaysse, when she saw for the first time the saviour of her family at Ferney. "That good and virtuous mother," he wrote to D'Alembert, "came to see me a few days ago; I cried like a child." She wrote to him from Paris, December 27, 1770, to thank him for the welcome he had given her at Ferney, and to assure him that her gratitude was proportioned to the immeasurable services he had rendered her. She survived to 1792, when she died at Paris, in her eighty-second year. One of her daughters married a Protestant minister, and lived at Paris until 1820. The two sons prospered at Geneva, where Voltaire kept upon them a friendly eye, and promoted their interest as occasion offered. Every Protestant in France breathed freer and lived safer for what he had done on behalf of this family, and *l'Infâme* received a blow from which it has not recovered.

Few events of that century excited so wide or so durable an interest. M. Coquerel appends to his volume upon the history of the case a catalogue of publications relating to it, which numbers one hundred and thirteen works. The story has

been presented on the stage in ten plays, from the five-act tragedy to the one-act sketch. It has served as the theme of seven long poems. In England, Germany, Holland, and Switzerland, the important works upon the case were republished soon after their appearance in France. Besides the engraving just mentioned, there were others of considerable note, such as, "Jean Calas bidding Farewell to his Family;" "A Breakfast at Ferney," showing Voltaire in bed, and the picture of the Calas family hanging above; "Voltaire promising his Support to the Calas Family;" and "The Triumph of Voltaire."

The most important publication which these events elicited was a work by Voltaire himself, entitled "A Treatise upon Tolerance," a volume of more than two hundred pages, written during one of the long periods of the law's delay. In this book he gathered and stored the facts and lessons of the case for the admonition of men; and but for this book the case would soon have been swept into oblivion by the torrent of events. In this treatise it was preserved, and will remain accessible to future generations. Let no one cherish the delusion that such a plea for charity and tolerance will never again be needed. In the month of January, 1880, one hundred and seventeen years after the "Treatise upon Tolerance" was written, the newspapers brought us an account of Mahomedans near Gibraltar covering an aged Jew with kerosene and burning him to death, and reported to us the lectures of a Christian, in which men of another belief were denounced with a ferocity which Philip II. of Spain would have applauded in the Duke of Alva.

Voltaire opened his work with an account of the trial and execution of Jean Calas, written with the elegance, moderation, and force of his "Charles XII." It is a masterpiece of calm and lucid statement. Then he proceeded to discourse upon the lessons taught by those sad and terrible events. One remark was this: "People in Languedoc have religion enough to hate and persecute, but not enough to love and succor." He showed that it was the zeal for *dogma* which had done this fell deed, — the claim to expound the universe by authority. He reviewed the history of the world for proofs that man has never been so cruel as when he has waged war for

conscience' sake. He dwelt much upon the *safeness* of toleration: "Cast your eyes upon the other hemisphere. See Carolina, of which the wise Locke was law-giver; where seven fathers of families suffice to establish a mode of public worship approved by law, — a liberty which has given rise to no disorder." The toleration of all religions by the Greeks and Romans was adduced; China, India, and other Asiatic nations furnished examples. He came at length to speak of the absurd contrast between the intolerant religion of France and its tolerant politics. The first edition of this powerful and pathetic plea concluded with a prayer:—

"May those who light candles at high noon to celebrate thy worship tolerate those who are content with the light of thy sun. May those who cover their garments with white linen when they say that God ought to be loved not hold in detestation those who say the same thing in a mantle of black wool. May it be held equal to adore thee in a jargon formed of an ancient tongue, or in a jargon of more recent origin. May those whose coat has been dyed red or violet, who dominate over a little portion of a little lump of the dirt of this world, and who possess some rounded fragments of a certain metal enjoy without pride what they call grandeur and riches, and may others behold them without envy; for thou knowest that there is not in these vanities anything really enjoyable, nor anything worthy to swell with pride a human heart.

"May all men remember that they are brothers! May they hold in horror the tyranny exercised over souls! May they look with execration upon the brigandage which ravishes by force the fruits of labor and peaceful industry! If the scourge of war is unavoidable, let us not hate one another, let us not tear one another to pieces, in time of peace; and let us employ the moment of our existence in blessing equally, in a thousand different languages, from Siam to California, thy bounty which has given us that moment."

CHAPTER XXXII.

FERNEY A REFUGE FOR THE OPPRESSED.

THE natural reward of a good action is opportunity to do others of the same kind. We have seen that the adoption and happy marriage of Marie Corneille brought to light many young Corneilles and Racines, willing to be provided for on similar terms. The rescue of Madame Calas and her children from want and infamy exalted Ferney into a refuge for the victims of popular prejudice and defective laws. A poet's grandsons have no just claim to exemption from the common lot of mortals, and Voltaire could elude their importunities with a jest. It was otherwise with the people who now besought his help. We can say of him that he did not once turn a fatigued or impatient ear to his countrymen ruined by means similar to those which blasted the family of Calas.

He soon discovered that the methods of justice in France were so defective that no man was safe who had a resolute and adroit accuser. There was no trial by jury; and, in capital cases, one more than a majority of numerous judges sufficed to doom the accused to torture and death. Hearsay testimony was admitted without adequate precautions; and, in all matters relating to religion, there was an amount of susceptible prejudice in the people that made fair investigation impossible. It was like performing electrical experiments with gunpowder lying about.

The patience, the skill, the tender, generous compassion, with which Voltaire labored, first, for the restoration of ruined families, and, afterwards, for the reform of the criminal procedure which had unjustly condemned them, has never been equaled since man first became capable of pitying his fellow. In doing this high and great duty, he ennobled and purified himself; his later letters exhibit to us a better and broader man than those of his earlier years. The time will come

when the twenty volumes of the writings of his old age will furnish texts, chapters, volumes, for the nourishment of humane principles in young and old. The lesson they teach is that injustice to any man wrongs and imperils every man, and that we should all feel it as if it had been dealt to ourselves. With the utmost convenient brevity I will mention a few of the instances of his interference on behalf of those who came to implore the aid of the saviour of Madame Calas and her children.

THE SIRVEN FAMILY.

M. Sirven was a professional *feudiste* (that is, a person learned in fiefs and feudal tenures) of Castres, in Languedoc, a day's ride from Toulouse; his family consisting of wife and three daughters, one of whom was married. The housekeeper of the Bishop of Castres conceived the project of converting the youngest daughter to the Catholic religion, an undertaking which the laws favored in every way. A child of seven declaring a desire to become a Catholic could be taken away from its parents and consigned to a religious house. The bishop, approving the scheme, placed the girl in a convent of Black Ladies, as they were popularly called, — nuns under the charge of the Jesuits. Either the discipline was too severe, or the girl was disposed to insanity; for she returned to her parents out of her mind, her body covered with the marks of the convent whip. Her mania increased, until in January, 1762, she secretly left her father's house, and could not be found. Several days after, while her father was at a château of the province, engaged in professional labors, some children discovered her body at the bottom of a well, three miles from her home.

This occurred at the time when the whole province was frenzied with the affair of the Calas family, then in prison, awaiting execution. At once the cry arose, "Is it not evident that Protestants are sworn to massacre any of their children who embrace the Roman and Apostolic religion?" Testimony springs out of the earth at such a time, in such a place. The authorities acted with fervent promptitude, and the Sirvens fled in terror toward Switzerland. No Protestant could hope for justice then in Languedoc, and, doubtless, they escaped the fate of the Calas family only by instantaneous flight.

They were summoned to appear and answer the charge of murdering the girl. Their failure to obey was deemed a confession of guilt; they were all pronounced guilty, and the parents were sentenced to die by the hangman. The daughters were condemned to remain under the gallows during the execution of their mother, to be conducted thence beyond the boundary line of the province by the executioner, and were forbidden to return, on pain of death. The estate of the family was confiscated.

Through the snows and icy winds of a severe winter the Sirvens pursued their anxious journey toward the Alps, and through the Alps, by the less frequented roads, to Geneva. The married daughter gave premature birth to a child among the mountains, and soon after the mother of the family died of fright and despair. The father found himself a stranger in a strange land, with his two daughters, without property, and acquainted only with a profession that was not available in the little republic of Geneva. As yet, Voltaire had not heard of the madness raging in the south of France, and the Sirvens knew nothing of him except from his fame in literature. It was not until the next year, when the first great step had been won toward the restoration of the Calas family, that they went to Ferney and related to him the story of their ruin and exile. He took up their case with as fresh and prompt a zeal as though it were the first instance of the kind he had ever heard of.

How can I compress into a few lines the volumes of letters, pamphlets, pleas, articles, which he wrote or caused to be written on the Sirvens? For nine years he labored for the reversal of their condemnation with the energy of personal interest and the tact of the experienced advocate. If money was needed, he gave it, or asked one of his monarchs to give it; if a pamphlet was required, he wrote it; if a lawyer, he employed him. Other men tire when an affair in which they have no personal concern draws out from months to years; but he, after several years of frustration and delay, was as alert and resolute as ever. "This business," he wrote to D'Argental, in the fourth year of the struggle, "agitates all my soul; tragedies, comedies, the *tripod*, are no longer anything to me. Time goes too slowly; I wish the *Mémoire* of

Elie de Beaumont was already published, and all Europe ringing with it. I would send it to the Mufti and to the Grand Turk, if they knew French. The blows aimed at fanaticism ought to penetrate from one end of the world to the other."

Such zeal is contagious, and subscriptions came in freely for the *Sirvens*, even from remote parts of Europe. Frederic of Prussia, who was then at peace with his other enemies, won over Voltaire also, at last, by sending five hundred francs for the *Sirven* family. I think the uncle of Madame Denis forgave him Frankfort and Freytag for that one act, and remembered them against him no more. Voltaire had now another ally and subscriber among the potentates of the earth: Catherine II., Empress of Russia, then beginning her illustrious reign. She had no sooner come to the throne, in 1762, than she turned for sympathy and light to the author who had formed her mind. If ever a woman of thirty-three needed sympathy and light, it was she, alone in that wide waste of empire.

Next to Frederic II. of Prussia, the most renowned monarch of her time was Catherine II. of Russia, whom the Russian people to this day regard as the true successor of Peter the Great. She had not a drop of Russian blood in her veins. The daughter of a poor German prince, a major-general in the Prussian army, she passed a part of her childhood at Frederic's court, a lively, robust, and well-behaved girl. It was Frederic who gave her to Peter, whom the Empress Elizabeth had adopted as heir to the Russian throne. There has seldom been a more incongruous union, even in royal houses. She was a young lady of sprightly wit and intelligent curiosity; he was incapable of any but sensual pleasures. She owed much to Voltaire during the dreary and troublous years preceding the death of Elizabeth. She wrote to him once in such words as these: —

"Since the year 1746, when I became mistress of my own time, I have been under the greatest obligations to you. Before that period I read nothing but romances; but by chance your works fell into my hands, and ever since I have not ceased to read them, and I have desired no books which were not as well written as yours, or as instructive. But where can I find such? I return continually to the creator of my taste,

as to my dearest amusement. Assuredly, monsieur, if I have any knowledge, it is to you that I owe it. I am reading at present your 'Essay upon General History,' and I should like to learn every page of it by heart."

Nothing can be more evident than that she began her reign with intentions as virtuous and elevated as those which had filled the mind of the youthful Frederic. She endeavored to carry out all the reformatory ideas of Voltaire. Besides simplifying the Russian code of laws, one of the first acts of her reign was to abolish torture. She introduced and sanctioned the practice of vaccination. She created the Russian Academy of Arts and Sciences, founded libraries and schools, and carried still further the principle of tolerance which the great Peter had begun to incorporate in the constitution of the empire. She became also a staunch and liberal ally in his endeavors to promote the same principle in France.

She responded handsomely to his application on behalf of the Sirven family. "I confess to you," she wrote, "that I should prefer my letter of exchange to remain a secret. If, nevertheless, you think that my name, little harmonious as it is, may be of some service to those victims of the persecuting spirit, I submit the matter to your discretion, and you will use my name, provided only that it shall do them no harm."

She told him also that the principle of tolerance was part of the fundamental law of the empire, and that no one in Russia could be lawfully molested for opinion's sake. "We have, it is true," she added, "some fanatics among us, who, in default of persecution, burn themselves, and if those of other countries were to do as much no great harm would come of it; the world would be more tranquil, and Calas would not have died upon the wheel."

In her hatred of *l'Infâme* she was a woman after Voltaire's own heart, and he lent a very willing ear to Russian gentlemen who assured him, upon their own knowledge, that she was innocent of the murder of her drunken husband. Readers are aware that she signified to Europe her sense of the value of the Encyclopædia by bestowing leisure and independence upon Diderot, the editor of the work. Hearing that his poverty compelled him to offer his library for sale, she bought it, but allowed him to keep it at his own house, gave him a salary of

a thousand francs a year for taking care of it for her, and paid his salary fifty years in advance.¹

But the Sirvens were still in suspense. Ten years passed before they were restored to their rights, and, in part, compensated for their losses. They had been tried and condemned, as Voltaire remarked, in "two hours" of January, 1762; it was in January, 1772, that he announced the complete success of his endeavors in their behalf. He wrote thus to Madame du Voisin, the married daughter of Madame Calas, January 15, 1772:—

"This letter, madame, will be for you, for M. du Voisin, and for madame your mother. The Sirven family assembled at my house yesterday, shedding tears of joy. The new parliament of Toulouse has condemned the previous judges to pay all the costs of the criminal prosecution, a measure almost unexampled. I regard this decision, which I have at last obtained with so much trouble, as an *amende honorable*. The family have been wanderers for ten whole years. It is, like your own family, a memorable example of the atrocious injustice of men. May Madame Calas, as well as her children, enjoy all their lives a happiness as great as their misfortunes were cruel! May your lives be extended beyond the ordinary limits, and when an entire century shall have passed may it be said, 'Behold this worthy family that has lasted so long to be the condemnation of a parliament which has ceased to be!' Such are the wishes for it of an old man who is going very soon to leave this world."

The vindication of the Sirvens was even more complete than that of the Calas family, since the reversal of judgment came from Toulouse itself, where the wrong had been committed ten years before. As usual, Voltaire distributed compliments among those who had assisted him to win this signal though tardy triumph. He did more. We see him bestirring himself for the promotion of Damilaville, and for the exculpation of the Empress Catherine, whose good name needed a little attention on the part of her friends.

"I have another favor to ask you [he wrote to D'Argental]; it is for my Catherine. It is necessary to establish her reputation in Paris among worthy people. I have strong reasons for believing that Messieurs the Dukes of Praslin and Choiseul do not regard her as the woman in the world who is the most scrupulous. Nevertheless, I

¹ Diderot and the Encyclopædists. By John Morley. Page 195.

know, as well as one can know, that she had no part in the death of that drunkard of a husband of hers. A great devil of an officer of the guards, Préobazinsky, in taking him prisoner, gave him a horrible blow with his fist, which made him vomit blood. He thought to cure himself by drinking continually of punch in prison, and he died in that pleasing exercise. He was, besides, the greatest fool that ever occupied a throne. . . . We are under obligations to her for having had the courage to dethrone her husband, for she reigns with wisdom and with glory; and we ought to bless a crowned head who makes toleration universal through one hundred and thirty-five degrees of longitude. You have not, you others, more than eight or nine degrees, and yet you are not tolerant. Say, then, much good of Catherine, I pray you, and create for her a good reputation at Paris."

THE ESPINASSE FAMILY.

Jean-Pierre Espinasse was a Protestant gentleman, of good estate, living in the province of Languedoc. In 1740, he received into his house a Protestant clergyman, to whom he gave supper and lodging. For this violation of law he was condemned to the galleys for life, and his estate was confiscated, except that one third was reserved for the support of his children. He served twenty-three years in the galleys. During part of that period, his wife lived in Switzerland, at Lausanne, supported at the public expense. In 1763, through Voltaire's exertions, he was released, and came to Switzerland, to find his wife a pauper and his three children destitute. This family, too, joined the throng crowding about Ferney for the reversal of unjust judgments; and Voltaire freely gave them the aid of his influence and talents. We see him writing long, ingenious, pathetic letters to the Duke of Nivernais, the Duke of Richelieu, and others, imploring them to intercede with the bigoted chancellor for the restoration of their estate. In 1766, after three years of solicitation, he had a measure of success, the family being allowed a portion of the revenue of their property. Probably he did not rest content; but at this point the name disappears from the memorials of the time.

"You will ask me," wrote Voltaire to Richelieu, in 1766, "why I am always pestering you about the Huguenots. It is because, every day, I see those unfortunate people; it is because I see families broken up and without bread; it is because a hundred people come to my house to implore and weep, and because it is impossible not to be moved by them."

Languedoc, we observe by this affair, was more than eighty years behind New England in getting *l'Infâme* under subjection. It was about the year 1659 that Thomas Macey, of Massachusetts, was fined for not instantly driving out into the rain two way-worn Quakers who, in his absence, had sought shelter in his house from a storm. He was fined only thirty shillings for this offense; but he was so wounded by it that he removed to Nantucket, its first white settler, preferring to cast in his lot with the Indians of that sea-beaten island.¹

GENERAL LALLY.

It was not *l'Infâme* that wronged the Count of Lally, the brave, unfortunate commander of the French forces in India during the Seven Years' War. The methods of justice were in fault,—the criminal system that rated prejudiced and hearsay testimony as of equal weight with that of competent eye-witnesses. Never was a scarred veteran more foully treated by the country he had served than General Lally.

He was a son of Sir Gerard Lally, an Irish gentleman, who followed the fortunes of the Stuarts, and settled in France when they found refuge there under Louis XIV. He was a soldier from his childhood. At eight years he was with his father at the siege of a town; at twelve, through the favor of the Regent, he was a captain by rank, and actually served as such in his father's regiment. He rose to a colonelcy during the first half of the reign of Louis XV., and at the battle of Fontenoy he distinguished himself in sight of the king, and was soon after raised to the rank of lieutenant-general, decorated with the *grand cordon* of Saint-Louis, and sent to India to take command of the French forces and interests in that country.

Lally possessed three traits of his Irish ancestors: impetuous valor, an ill-governed tongue, and a burning hatred of the English. For many years he had been the soul of the Irish band in France who plotted for the restoration of the Stuarts, and in India he said, "All my policy is in these five words: *No more English in India!*" But he could not, with the means at his command, carry out that simple and neatly de-

¹ The New Puritan, or New England Two Hundred Years Ago, by James S. Pike. New York, 1879. Page 54.

fined scheme. Clive had been fifteen years in India when Lally took command, and he had conquered for his countrymen such a footing there that no power then existing in the world could have dislodged them. Their fleet, their guineas, their men, their knowledge of the country, made up a force which frustrated the French general, and France saw her dream of an Indian empire resolve itself into a ship-load of French prisoners on their way to England, among whom was the Count of Lally himself. In England the count was released on his parole, and returned to France to face a host of disappointed share-holders in the East India Company, and a country soured with the results of a war the most disastrous of that reign.

The English ministry had sought to appease a dissatisfied people by the sacrifice of Admiral Byng. The French government attempted to pacify France by the destruction of General Lally. He was accused of every crime of which he was signally incapable. He was charged with having brought home millions of francs' worth of diamonds, the price of treason; the fact was, he had spent in India the last rupee he could command in the public service. A clamor arose against him, and he demanded an investigation. Writing to the Duke of Choiseul, he said, "I bring here my head and my innocence; I await your orders." He was arrested, at length, and consigned to the Bastille, where he remained fifteen months, without being asked a question or informed of what he was accused. The ministry did not know what to do with him, nor how to try him, for he was charged with cowardice, peculation, robbery, and treason. The lamentable defects of the French criminal system were as manifest in this case as in the trial of Jean Calas. The indictment against him contained one hundred and sixty counts, of which the most serious was that he had sold Pondichéry to the English for money. A special court of fifteen members of the parliament of Paris tried him. The public prosecutor was that cruel, ingenious, indefatigable Pasquier, who had conducted the trial of crazy Damiens, and enjoyed a royal pension for his demoniac management of that case. Despite the absence of all direct testimony, and in the teeth of all probability, General Lally was doomed to die by the axe, ten of his fifteen judges consenting thereto. No kind

of fault was proved against him except some imprudences of language.

The manner of his execution was of unexampled atrocity. He was sixty-four years of age, a man of gray hairs, a lieutenant-general, six times wounded in the service of France. The king, prejudiced against him, shut himself up at Choisy, six miles from Paris, to avoid being solicited for his pardon, but gave orders that the sentence of decapitation should be executed in the least painful manner. It was agreed, in consequence, that he should be conveyed to the place of execution in the evening, in a close carriage, and that the officer accompanying him should be in plain clothes. But Pasquier, an unrelenting bigot, so vehemently objected to this mitigation of the penalty that a dispatch was sent to the king for further instructions. The king's reply was that the judges should do as they thought best.

"Then," says Dangerville, "the executioner took possession of his prey, and handcuffed him. Under the pretext that negroes had the art of strangling themselves with their tongues, a device which M. de Lally might have learned in his travels, he proposed to put a gag into his mouth. This suggestion was eagerly adopted by M. Pasquier, and so much the more because the gag would spare him the violent words which M. de Lally, in his fury, wished to let loose upon him. It was with such an appendage, and in the cart used for the vilest criminals, that M. de Lally was conveyed to the Grève (a public place in Paris), through an immense crowd, not only of common people and *bourgeois*, but of military men and courtiers also. At the foot of the scaffold his gag was removed. Many people expected to hear him harangue; but he recovered his self-possession, ascended quietly, and received the fatal stroke without uttering a word."¹

The gag and the cart excited murmurs in the crowd, but the weight of public opinion was against the hapless general, and the emotion created by the manner of his execution was transient. General Lally was beheaded May 6, 1766.

Voltaire was following the long trial with much interest, when he was startled by its tragic termination, which he was far from expecting. In earlier years, when he was speculating

¹ Vie Privée de Louis XV., par Dangerville. Quoted in 8 Barbier, 416.

in India merchandise, he had often met the Count of Lally at the Duke of Richelieu's, and may even have been associated with him in promoting the French East India Company. His impression was strong that the general was another victim of the savage ingenuity of Pasquier. D'Alembert wrote to him soon after: "Do you know, my dear master, a certain M. Pasquier, counselor to the court, who has big eyes and is a great talker? They say of him that his head resembles a calf's head, the tongue of which is good to grill." Voltaire replied, "Yes, indeed, I know him, — that snout of ox and heart of tiger!"

He knew him very well indeed, and, knowing him, he began to collect documents relating to General Lally, often reminding his Paris familiars of the incompleteness of his collection. It was not easy then to get copies of depositions and examinations. Time passed, — months, years; and still the blood of the murdered man was unavenged, and the honor of a patriotic family was not vindicated. Voltaire, it is true, in his "History of the Reign of Louis XV.," exculpated General Lally, and described his trial and execution in becoming terms; but, in France, nothing is held to remove the stigma of an unjust condemnation except its reversal in form by a competent court.

Lally left a son, a school-boy of fifteen, who knew not the name of his father until the last day of that father's life. He had never borne his father's name. He wrote once, "I only learned the name of my mother four years after I had lost her, and that of my father but one day before losing him. I ran to bear him my first homage and my eternal adieu. I ran in vain. The moment had been anticipated; I did not find my father; I only saw the trace of his blood." To this son General Lally had confided the task of vindicating his memory; and, from that day, the boy devoted himself to its performance. At twenty-two he sent his first Mémoire to Voltaire, who gave him the sage advice of a man long practiced in the art of rehabilitation. He told him what not to do, whom not to offend, what interests to conciliate, what persons to appease. "For my own part," he added, "I offer to be your secretary, despite my age." Under the title of "Historical Fragments upon India," Voltaire wrote a volume of three hundred pages, in which the whole history of French enterprises in India was related in the most interesting manner, including a full ac-

count of the campaigns and disasters, the life, trial, and execution, of General Lally. This volume was published in 1773, and it prepared the way for a reversal of the unjust judgment.

The usual delays ensued. Meanwhile, Voltaire did not disdain to make the most of the favor of Madame Dubarry, the king's last mistress, without whose approval not one step could have been taken. Doubtless, it was through her that the young man obtained a commission in the royal musketeers, as well as a portion of his father's confiscated estate. We leave him here, in 1773, a captain in the king's service, assailing all ears and eyes with *Mémoires* and factums on behalf of his father. Under the *régime* of that period, this little epistle of Voltaire to the extravagant, good-natured Dubarry was worth a hundred eloquent pleas:—

“Madame, M. de la Borde has told me that you ordered him to kiss me for you on both cheeks.

Quoi! deux baisers sur la fin de ma vie!
 Quelle passe-port vous daignez m'envoyer!
 Deux! c'est trop d'un, adorable Egérie;
 Je serais mort de plaisir au premier.¹

“He has shown me your portrait; you are not offended, madame, if I have taken the liberty to pay back to it the two kisses.

Vous ne pouvez empêcher cet hommage,
 Faible tribut de quiconque a des yeux.
 C'est aux mortels d'adorer votre image;
 L'original était fait pour les dieux.²

“I have heard several *morceaux* from the ‘Pandore’ of M. de la Borde; they seemed to me worthy of your protection. Favor bestowed upon the veritable fine arts is the only thing which can augment the *éclat* with which you shine.

“Deign to accept, madame, the profound respect of an old hermit, whose heart has scarcely any sentiment left except gratitude.”

This in 1773. It was the last year of the Dubarry's reign;

¹ What! two kisses at the end of my life! What a passport you deign to send me! Two! It is one too many, adorable Egeria; I should be dead of pleasure at the first.

² You cannot prevent this homage, a feeble tribute from whomsoever has eyes. It is for mortals to adore your image; the original was made for the gods.

else, the son of General Lally might have sooner vindicated his father's memory. Her power was at times all but absolute. She exiled in 1770 the prime minister, the Duke of Choiseul, whom her predecessor had created and sustained. She at least began the eminent fortune of the son of General Lally, who became in the next reign a marquis and peer, and was known in the public life of his country until 1830.

THE CHEVALIER DE LA BARRE.

The scene of the events now to be related was Abbeville, a small city of the north of France, on the navigable river Somme, twelve miles from the English Channel. There was a convent there, the abbess of which was a lady of distinguished family, a highly agreeable and attractive woman. A magistrate of the vicinity, Duval by name, a man sixty years of age, much employed in the business affairs of the convent, fell in love with her, and pressed his suit with offensive importunity. The abbess sent for her nephew, Chevalier de la Barre, to come and live in the town, promising to use her influence in procuring for him the object of his ambition, a commission in a regiment of cavalry. He was the son of a lieutenant-general who had squandered a large estate, and he looked to his aunt for the influence which alone could advance him in the military profession.

The abbess often invited him and his companions to supper, to the exclusion of Duval, who conceived a violent animosity against the young man; and he, on his part, treated the elderly magistrate with aggravating *hauteur*. La Barre was twenty years of age, ill-instructed, a reader of scandalous books, but by no means of a perverse or depraved character. He was, simply, a very young French gentleman of that period; neither worse nor better than many others.

It was a bad time for young men of family and education, who, above all others, need the restraints and the inspirations of a true religion. For them the old religion was a dead thing; they saw the brightest spirits of the age pelting its ghastly and sumptuous corpse; and there was, as yet, no hint or hope of one which could assist them to control their propensities and ennoble their purposes.

On a certain night in August, 1765, a foolish deed was done

in Abbeville that filled the region round about with horror and consternation. A wooden crucifix which stood upon an old bridge over the Somme was hacked with a knife in many places, and in such a way as to permit no doubt that the mutilation was done purposely. On the same night a crucifix in one of the cemeteries of the city was covered with mud. Upon the discovery of these injuries, the people were thrown into the same kind of affright as that which used to seize the people of ancient Athens when an image of Minerva was supposed to have been profaned, and the goddess made angry with her own beloved city. The bishop of the diocese inflamed the general excitement. An austere and zealous prelate, he arranged a solemn procession to avert the anger of heaven from Abbeville. The bishop himself, with bare feet and a cord round his neck, marched at its head, and, kneeling before the image, he invoked mercy upon those who had profaned it, — men, he said, who were not beyond the reach of heavenly mercy, though they had “rendered themselves worthy of the severest punishments known to this world’s law.” An indulgence of forty days was granted to all of either sex who should visit the injured crucifix, now transported to the principal church of the city. That church was filled all day with worshipers. Processions of various orders and societies were seen every hour going toward it, chanting psalms as they went. The religious fervor of the people was by these expedients excited to the highest degree; and that species of fervor is closely akin to the direst cruelty.

One of those terrible *monitoires* was read in all the churches, threatening vague perdition against all persons having knowledge of the matter, “whether by hearsay or otherwise,” who should fail to declare it. The usual mad rumors ran from circle to circle: a new sect had been formed, sworn to break all images and tread the sacrament under foot; the Jews were at their old familiar work of profaning Christian emblems.

Then it was that Duval, blinded by jealous hate, pointed to the Chevalier de la Barre as the probable perpetrator of the “sacrilege;” and, in his character of magistrate, he inquired into all the past life of the young man, questioning valets, servants, workmen. He discovered no proof, and none was ever discovered, that La Barre had defaced the crucifix

on the bridge. He learned that the young man and two of his companions had once passed within thirty yards of a procession bearing the sacrament without taking off their hats. La Barre confessed as much, and attributed the omission to his being too late for dinner. Duval also ascertained that these young roysterers had been in the habit of singing loose ditties and chanting Rabelaisian litanies; particularly, a certain song written by Piron in his youth, and known to most young men of that period. Armed with such testimony as this, the infuriate Duval formally denounced the chevalier, which compelled the magistrates of Abbeville to investigate the charge.

A crowd of witnesses (seventy-seven in all) came forward to testify. Half a dozen young men of Abbeville were accused of singing the objectionable songs and uttering the burlesque litanies. One of them was Duval's own son, who took to flight, as did others of the accused. The rooms of La Barre, D'Etallonde, and the rest were searched. Among their books were found several light novels of the day; also, one of Voltaire's deistical poems, the "Epistle to Uranie," and the two little volumes, just published, of the "Philosophical Dictionary," — works to be found in thousands of rooms, all over Europe. Duval pushed on the prosecution with all the fury of a David of Toulouse, encouraged, as he was, by the applause of all priests and many people. Fortunately, D'Etallonde escaped in time, and reached the dominions of the King of Prussia, where, having spent all his money, and being in danger of starvation, he enlisted as a soldier in a regiment posted at Vessel. Another of the accused, a lad of fifteen, saved himself by confessing that he and his young friends had indeed sung the songs, said the litanies, and bowed in mock homage to the books.

La Barre alone was a prisoner; but D'Etallonde was condemned and sentenced, as though he, too, had been in the power of the court. He was but eighteen years of age; La Barre was scarcely twenty. The crimes of which they were found guilty were thus described by the court: "Wickedly, and from impiety, passing with deliberate steps before the holy sacrament without taking off the hat or kneeling; uttering blasphemies against God, the holy eucharist, the holy virgin,

the religion and commandments of God and of the church ; singing two songs filled with execrable and abominable blasphemies against God, the holy eucharist, the holy virgin, and the saints, male and female ; rendering marks of adoration and respect to infamous books ; profaning the sign of the cross, the mystery of the consecration of the wine, and the benedictions in use in churches and among Christians."

These were the offenses of the young men. Thousands of merry priests had committed the same, when they read and laughed over their much-loved Rabelais ; and thousands of French ladies, also, when they copied the light verses of the time into their diaries, and read them aloud to their companions at supper. La Barre, present, and D'Etallonde, absent, were condemned to be subjected to the torture, ordinary and extraordinary, to extort the names of their "accomplices ;" to have their tongues torn out by the roots with pincers of iron ; to have their right hands cut off at the door of the principal church of Abbeville ; to be drawn in a cart to the marketplace, and there, having been bound to stakes by iron chains, to be burned to death by a slow fire. In consideration of La Barre's presence, the sentence was mitigated in his case so far that he was allowed to be beheaded before being burned. The court further ordered that some of the books found in their rooms, particularly the "Philosophical Dictionary," should be cast into the fire with their bodies, and consumed with them.

No rational being seems to have thought, at the time, that this hideous sentence would be carried into effect. Extraordinary efforts were made to save a life so young and so innocent. An appeal was taken. Ten of the first advocates of Paris joined in a declaration that, in their opinion, the sentence was illegal. The prisoner was removed to Paris, where the case was examined by a court of twenty-five judges, fifteen of whom voted to confirm the sentence ; and the young man was sent back to Abbeville, followed by five executioners, supposed to be competent to execute it.

He bore the long, unspeakable anguish of the fatal day with a fortitude that is absolutely without parallel. The confessor who was assigned him was an old friend of his aunt, the abbess, often her guest, with whom the chevalier had merrily supped many a time at the convent. He dined with this priest

before his torments began. "Let us," said the prisoner, "take a little nourishment; you will have need of strength, as much as I, to bear the spectacle I am going to give." He could even jest. At the close of the meal he said, "Let us have some coffee; it will not prevent my sleeping." The executioners themselves proved unequal to the task they had undertaken, and only pretended to tear out his tongue. At the scaffold, therefore, he was still able to speak. Just before mounting it, he quietly said to the priest, "I did not believe a young gentleman could be put to death for so little a thing." One of the executioners came forward to cut his hair. "Why," said the prisoner, "do you wish to make me look like a choir boy?" The executioner from Paris, who was to give the final stroke of the axe, then presented himself. "Are your arms strong?" said La Barre. "Was it not you who cut off the head of the Count of Lally?" "Yes, monsieur," replied the man. "You missed, did you not?" "He was in a bad position," said the executioner. "Place yourself properly, and I will not fail you." "Fear nothing," said the prisoner. "I will place myself aright, and not play the baby." He laid his head upon the block, and again spoke with the most perfect serenity: "Is that right?" The executioner did his work with such dexterity that he was rewarded by a general clapping of hands.

Thus perished, July 1, 1766, almost within sight of the white cliffs of humane England, this heroic youth, to the horror of what was called "all France;" that is, to the horror of the few thousands of people who, by sharing the intellectual life of France, had escaped the domination of *l'Infâme*.

No event of his whole life-time so deeply moved Voltaire as this execution. He was ready to abandon his country. When the news reached Ferney that, in spite of the argument of the ten advocates, the fell sentence had been carried into effect, he was incoherent with rage, alarm, amazement, and compassion. He dashed upon paper, July 16, 1766, a wild letter to the D'Argentals, imploring further information:—

"I throw myself at your noses, at your feet, at your wings, my divine angels. I ask you in mercy to tell me if there is nothing new. I entreat you to send me the opinion of the advocates; it is a monument of generosity, firmness, and wisdom, of which, also, I have very

urgent need. If you have only one copy, which you do not wish to lose, I will have it transcribed, and instantly send it back to you. The atrocity of this affair seizes me with horror and wrath. I repent having ruined myself in building and doing good within the boundaries of a country where barbarities are committed in cold blood and in going to dinner, which would make drunken savages shudder. And this is a people so gentle, so light, and so gay! Man-devouring harlequins! I wish no more to hear you spoken of. Run from the stake to a ball, and from the place of execution to the comic opera; break Calas upon the wheel; hang Sirven; burn five poor young men, who, as my angels say, ought only to have been put six months in St. Lazarus. I cannot breathe the same air as you! My angels, I conjure you once more to tell me all you know. The Inquisition is insipid in comparison with your Jansenists of the Grand-Chamber and the Tournelle. There is no law whatever which orders horrors like these in such a case; only the devil could be capable of burning men in the teeth of the law. What! the caprice of five old fools shall suffice to inflict penalties which would have made Busiris tremble? I stop, for I should say much more. I have already said too much of demons; I wish only to love my angels."

As more exact information reached him, his indignation increased. He wondered that, in the presence of such horrors, the gay and brilliant life of Paris could continue. His countrymen, he said, were monkeys, who could at any moment become tigers. He formed the serious design of abandoning France, and founding a colony of philosophers in the dominions of the King of Prussia; whence, with their own printing-press, they would inundate the universe with works against *l'Infâme*. July 21st he wrote to Damilaville, who had urged him not to allow this terrible event to prey upon his health:—

"I do not permit myself to be cast down; but my grief, my anger, and my indignation redouble every instant. So far am I from yielding that I shall probably adopt the resolution of going to finish my days in a country where I shall be able to do some good. I shall not be alone. It may be that the reign of reason and true religion will be immediately established, and silence iniquity and falsehood. I am persuaded that the prince who will favor this enterprise would procure for you an agreeable destiny, if you were willing to be one of the company. A letter from Protagoras [D'Alembert] would serve you much in that quarter. I know that you have courage enough to follow me; but you have probably some ties which you will not be able to break.

Already I have begun to take measures; if you second me, I shall not hesitate. Meanwhile, I conjure you to take at least, at the office of M. de Beaumont, the outline of the decision, with the names of the judges. I have seen no one who does not go into a fury at the recital of that abomination. My dear brother, how wicked are men, and what need I have to see you!"

Other letters attest the reality of the scheme of founding the colony. The King of Prussia gave it cautious encouragement. "You speak to me," wrote the king, August 7, 1766, "of a colony of philosophers who propose to establish themselves at Clèves. I do not oppose the project; I can accord them all that they ask, except, perhaps, wood, which the sojourn of their countrymen [during the late war] almost entirely destroyed in those forests. Nevertheless, this will be on condition that they restrain those who ought to be restrained, and that they will observe decency in their publications. . . . May Heaven or destiny get this tragedy out of your head, and may you enlighten agreeably and peaceably the age which you render illustrious! If you come to Clèves, I shall have again the pleasure of seeing you, and of assuring you of the admiration which your genius has always inspired in me."

The king also offered him a house near Clèves. The plan of expatriation was not carried out, for the simple reason that none of "the brethren" were willing or able to follow him into exile. "M. de Voltaire," says Wagnière, "proposed to several poor men of letters to go with him thither, but none of them were willing. His intention was to form at Clèves a kind of society of philosophers agreeing with him in opinion: that is to say, of pure deists."

Not the less did he exert himself to undo a portion of the mischief which had been done against the laws of France by the ministers of the law. He wrote immediately one of his little pamphlets, entitled "Narrative of the Death of the Chevalier de la Barre," a simple, graphic account of the matter, which no one could resist. In 1775, at the beginning of the next reign, he followed this with one still more powerful and affecting, addressed to the young King Louis XVI., called the "Cry of Innocent Blood," in which he gave an outline of the hearsay testimony upon which the young man had been

condemned. The object of this was to procure a formal reversal of the abominable judgment.

Meanwhile, the youthful D'Etallonde, a young man of education and singular refinement, was shouldering a musket in a Prussian regiment, without hope of a happier destiny. When he had served some months, Voltaire was so fortunate as to discover his whereabouts from a Prussian officer who visited him at Ferney. January 13, 1767, he wrote to the young soldier the following letter: —

“A man who has been sensibly touched by your misfortunes, monsieur, and who is still penetrated with horror at the cruel fate of one of your friends, infinitely desires to be of service to you. Have the goodness to give information as to what vocation you feel yourself best suited; whether you speak German; if your handwriting is good; if you would like a situation at the court of some prince of Germany, or with some lord, as reader, secretary, librarian; whether you are still engaged in the service of his majesty the King of Prussia; whether you wish that your discharge should be asked of him; and whether you can be recommended to him as a man of letters. In the latter case, he would have to be informed of your name, your age, and your misfortune. He would be touched by it; he detests barbarians; he thinks your condemnation abominable.

“Do not inquire who writes to you, but write a long detail to Geneva, to M. Misopriest, care of M. Souchai, cloth merchant, at the Golden Lion. Have the goodness to say to M. Haas, at whose house you lodge, that he shall be reimbursed the postage of all the letters which will be sent to you under cover.

“Also, monsieur, will you be pleased to inform us how much your father allows you per annum, and if you receive pay at Vesel? Nothing more can be said to you at present, and your answer is waited for.”

The young man promptly replied, transmitting the information requested with modesty, intelligence, and grace. Voltaire sent his answer to the King of Prussia, and wrote again to D'Etallonde, giving him good hopes of a better lot.

“The King of Prussia,” he wrote, “knows that you are only guilty of having inconsiderately mocked a superstition which all men of sense detest from the bottom of their hearts. You laughed at the grimaces of monkeys in the country of monkeys, and the monkeys tore you. . . . My first intention was to place you in an establishment which was projected at

Clèves. But this scheme encountered obstacles; it has been deranged; and the goodness of the king whom you serve appears to me at present a precious resource. He who writes to you desires passionately to be of service to you; and, if he could, he would make the barbarians repent who treated children with so much inhumanity."

All happened as he hoped it would. The King of Prussia gave the young man a commission in his service, and allowed him at once a long leave of absence, that he might visit Ferney. Voltaire sent him a sum of money to defray his traveling expenses, and gave him the welcome due to his sufferings and to his amiable disposition. He detained him at Ferney more than a year and a half, during which the young officer studied mathematics, fortification, surveying, drawing, and whatever else might fit him for a military career. "His good sense," wrote Voltaire, "his prudence, his assiduity in labor, and his extreme politeness gained him the hearts of all who lived at Ferney, and their number is not small." Wagnière bears similar testimony to the gentleness of his manners and the agreeableness of his person. Nine years after the awful scene at Abbeville, we find Voltaire still exerting himself to procure for the young man the inheritance of his confiscated property and the restoration of his civil rights.

Upon his final settlement in Prussia, with his new accomplishments, Frederic made him a captain of engineers, and added a pension to the pay of his rank, besides giving him those marks of personal regard which are of so much importance under absolute governments. He never, I believe, obtained the restoration of his rights as a French citizen. He could have had them, as it seems, in 1775, on condition of making a public confession of his fault, candle in hand, and asking pardon of the church upon his knees. He declined thus to degrade himself, and remained a subject of the Prussian king. Voltaire had the satisfaction of telling him, in 1775, that, among the events which inspired Turgot and his colleagues to reform the code and criminal procedure of France, none was more influential than the foul sentence pronounced at Abbeville in 1766, and executed upon his brave friend, the Chevalier de la Barre. It was through Captain d'Etallonde that the farmer of Ferney sent parcels of seeds to the King of

Prussia, such as enthusiastic agriculturists love to distribute among their friends for trial in other soils.

OTHER CASES.

I must not continue such narratives. In his correspondence of these years, there are allusions to several other instances of his persistent interference on behalf of the victims of popular prejudice and a bad code. The case of Montbailli and his wife, snuff-makers of Saint-Omer, a city in the north of France, was conspicuous among these. Montbailli's mother, a woman of enormous bulk from the excessive use of brandy, was found dead one morning in her room, which was next to the one occupied by him and his wife. It was a clear case of apoplexy. Nevertheless, a cry of "parricide" arose. The son and his wife were tried for the murder. It was shown that they had a pecuniary interest in prolonging her life, since with her died the license to manufacture snuff, their only means of subsistence. They were proved to be of amiable and gentle habits, fond of the culture of flowers, and patient with the violence of their drunken mother. On hearsay testimony of incredibly preposterous character, they were both found guilty of "parricide," and doomed to torture and the wheel. The execution of the young wife was postponed until after the birth of her child; but that of the husband, in all its hideous enormity, occurred at Saint-Omer, November 19, 1770. After the torture, ordinary and extraordinary, which he bore with heroic constancy, he was conveyed to the scaffold. At the great door of the cathedral, on the way, he confessed many faults, and added, with the solemnity of an oath, "I am innocent of the crime imputed to me." When his right hand was cut off, he added, "This hand is not guilty of parricide." As his bones were broken by the iron bar, he still declared his innocence, and when, as he was expiring, the priest urged him once more to confess, he said, "Why do you wish to force me to tell a lie? Do you take upon yourself the crime of it?"

The dullest imagination can form some slight idea of the situation of his young wife: alone in a dungeon; bereft of all good and all hope; expecting two periods of woful agony; then death. But her parents bestirred themselves. There

was one man in the world who could feel this giant wrong as though himself were suffering it. To him they appealed: and he to the Chancellor Maupeou, who granted him an extension of precious time. The case was examined anew; she was pronounced innocent, and borne back to Saint-Omer in triumph. "But," as Voltaire remarks pathetically in one of his pamphlets on this case, "her husband had died by the most horrible punishment, and his blood still cries for vengeance."

The case of Madame de Bombelles, in 1772, was one of curious enormity. The Viscount de Bombelles, an officer of the French army, discarded his wife on the ground that they had been married by the Protestant rite, she being of a Protestant family of Montauban. He married again, leaving his wife and child helpless. She claimed her rights. The court decided against her, pronounced her marriage void and her child illegitimate, condemned her to pay the costs of the suit, ordered that her child should be reared in the Catholic religion at the father's expense, and that she should be paid a sum of money as a woman betrayed and abandoned. In many an effective page, Voltaire exposed the iniquity of this transaction, and dwelt upon the infamy of the principle involved. It was *l'Infâme* that allowed this wrong. *Écrasez l'Infâme!*

From 1762 to the last hours of his life he never missed a chance to say to his countrymen, No Frenchman is safe from torture, death, and infamy, until we learn better the art of distinguishing truth from falsehood, and the *infinite* difference between "hearsay and otherwise." The absurdity of the whole system of torture he exposed in every light, and he created a general interest in criminal procedure which continues to bear fruit to the present day. Before he had been two years in the grave, the torture system was abolished in France, as it had previously been in the dominions of his pupils, Frederic II. of Prussia and Catherine II. of Russia.

In February, 1777, he read in the Gazette of Berne an anonymous advertisement, offering a prize of fifty louis d'or for the best outline of a criminal code, including a classification of crimes, the nature and force of proofs and presumptions, and the penalties affording the maximum of protection with the minimum of pain. He was eighty-three years of age then; but he responded to the call in his own way. He wrote

a pamphlet of a hundred and fifty pages on the subject, filled with hints, facts, suggestions, bearing upon it, and designed for the consideration of competitors. By way of preface, he copied the Berne advertisement, and appended to it, "Another Unknown, touched with the same zeal, adds fifty louis to the prize offered, and deposits them in the same hands (*Société Economique* of Berne), in order that the Society may either augment the prize, or give something to essays of less merit, according to its pleasure. We offer to those who shall compete our doubts upon a subject so important, in order that they may resolve them, if they deem them worthy of it."

After this modest introduction, he proceeds to point out the defects of the criminal systems of Europe, illustrating the same by facts and instances: as that of the pretty servant-girl, eighteen years old, recently hanged in France for stealing a dozen and a half of napkins from a mistress who owed her their value in wages; and that of the execution of English Dr. Dodd for forgery, instead of making him useful in Newfoundland, which needed workmen, or setting him to copying manuscripts. The chapter on Heresy was in his own vein. It ends with a noticeable passage: "The world is a little ameliorated, — yes, the thinking world; but the brute world will, for a long time to come, be composed of bears and monkeys, and the *canaille* will always be a hundred to one of the population. It is for that *canaille* that so many men, who despise it, compose their mien and disguise themselves. It is for the *canaille* that pompous ceremonies are presented; and for it alone that the punishment of a wretch is made a grand and superb spectacle."

The Salem witchcraft mania figured in his chapter upon Sorcerers, and his version of the facts may, perhaps, claim the distinction of being the least like the truth of any that has ever appeared in print.¹ Among ourselves, however, the facts are usually misstated, and generally exaggerated. In this and other chapters he prepared the way for the obliteration from criminal codes of all offenses arising from a difference of opin-

¹ "This infernal scene began in the little country of Salem [*petit pays de Salem*], like that of the capital of France, through a priest named Pâris, and by convulsions. This frenzied zealot imagined that all the inhabitants were possessed of the devil, and made them believe it. Half the people loaded the other half with chains, exorcised them, put them to the torture, a practice unknown in

ion. The loathsome and pestilential prisons of Europe did not escape his censure; he spoke of them as the illustrious Howard had been speaking of them in England for four years past, incited thereto by his own sufferings as a prisoner of war in French jails.

The good Howard occasionally visited Switzerland in those years, not unwilling to halt at Geneva among his brother Calvinists, but casting rueful glances toward Ferney, where lived the spoiler of their ancient simplicity. How cordially and blindly he detested Voltaire, though Voltaire was working in the same cause as himself, and had more in common with him, perhaps, than any other man in Europe! Writing in 1770 from that Abbeville where young La Barre perished in 1766, Howard says, "I returned to Geneva. There are some exemplary persons; yet the principles of one of the vilest men, Voltaire, with the corruptions of the French, who are within a mile of the city, has greatly debased its ancient purity and splendor." It was *l'Infâme* that made the good, illiterate Howard thus misconceive his fellow. Voltaire could have taught him much, but there was one thing, of first importance, which Howard could have taught Voltaire: not to call the heavy-laden, anxious masses of mankind *canaille*. Howard called them brethren, and once wrote in his diary these words, in harmony with which he acted always:—

"Let this maxim be a leading feature of my life: *Constantly to favor and relieve those that are lowest.*"¹

England, and made to perish on the scaffold old men, women, and children, and were in turn themselves chained, exorcised, tortured, and put to death. The province became a desert; it was necessary to send thither new inhabitants. Nothing is more incredible, and nothing is more true." (Prix de la Justice et de l'Humanité. Article IX. 40 Œuvres de Voltaire, 320.)

¹ Memoirs of John Howard, by J. B. Brown. London, 1818. Page 460.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE LORD OF FERNEY COMMUNES.

AFTER the marriage of Marie Corneille the inmates of Ferney were not assiduous in their attendance at the parish church, rebuilt by the lord of the manor. Madame Denis and the young lady, according to usage, confessed and communed at Easter in 1761. It was a beautiful spring day. The master, walking abroad to enjoy it in his park with his secretary, met and saluted the Capuchin monk who had confessed them. "Father," said he, "you have given many absolutions; will you not give one to me, also, who confess here, and before witnesses, that I do harm to no one, — at least, not knowingly?" The monk laughed, and said that that was well known both at Ferney and in the Capuchin convent. Voltaire put a six-franc piece in his hand, the common confession fee of the day, as it appears, which the Capuchin pocketed, and merrily went his way, saying that he hoped M. de Voltaire would continue his bounty to the Capuchins of Gex.

He did so. Some time after, he obtained from M. de Choiseul an annuity of six hundred francs a year for the convent, and, in return, the monks conferred upon him the title, by patent, of Temporal Father of the Capuchins of Gex, — a title of which he was wont to boast, — in his humorous manner.

There was, however, one priest who could not take him as a jest. This was the bishop of the diocese; a man, according to Voltaire, who was more fit to clean chimneys than to direct consciences. The lord of Ferney, perhaps, was not a fair judge of bishops. The Bishop of Anneci appears, in his letters, to have been simply a man of an intellect capable of believing what he preached. With him Voltaire came into collision in 1768, and the noise therefore was heard throughout Europe.

In the "Dictionnaire Philosophique," under the innocent

heading, "Grain" (*Blé ou Bled*), we are favored with some unexpected advice:—

"Distinguish always honest people who think from the populace that is not formed to think. If usage obliges you to perform a ridiculous ceremony for the sake of that *canaille*, and if on the road you meet some people of understanding, notify them by a sign of the head, by a look, that you think as they do; but it is not necessary to laugh. Weaken little by little all the ancient superstitions, and introduce no new ones. The laws ought to be for every one alike; but let each follow or reject, according to his pleasure, whatever is founded only upon indifferent usage. If the servant of Bayle dies in your arms, do not speak to her as you would to Bayle, nor to Bayle as to his servant. If imbeciles still wish to have acorns, let them eat acorns, but do not object to their being offered bread."

Upon this principle he was about to act once more, to the regret of some of his warmest friends, particularly of his guardian angels, the D'Argentals. At the beginning of 1768, there was, to use D'Alembert's expression, "an uproar" at Ferney. Some manuscripts of a perilous nature were missed by the master of the house, among others his *Memoirs of Frederic*, which no longer expressed his feeling toward that monarch. The theft was brought home to a guest, who enjoyed the special favor of Madame Denis. This lady could be made to endure country life only by a flow of company and a ceaseless round of amusements. Her uncle strove to provide her with both, and tried all his plays at their little theatre for her amusement. He was now past seventy, more devoted to labor than ever, the central figure in the intellectual world, the defender of injured innocence; and he bore with diminishing patience the exactions of a niece who had no other life than pleasure. According to Wagnière, there were violent quarrels between them on the discovery of the theft; Madame Denis hotly defending the accused. The subsequent events have been related by that faithful secretary, the only eye-witness of many of them, and we cannot do better than follow his interesting narrative. Wagnière did not like Madame Denis. He intimates that she led her too-indulgent uncle an uneasy life, and was much given to opposing his inclinations.

“On this occasion [he says] M. de Voltaire was quite out of patience with her, and, March 3, 1768, he sent her away, as well as the man whom she had defended. She went to Paris [for a while]. Seven other gentlemen, who then lodged in the house, perceiving, despite the extreme politeness of M. de Voltaire towards them, how much he needed repose and seclusion in the agitation and inquietude into which this event had thrown him, took leave one after the other. In a few days he was alone in the château, with me and his servants. The Sunday after, during mass, a theft was committed in a private house, near by. The seigneur of Ferney caused the suspected person to be brought into his presence, made him confess his crime, and obliged him to make restitution on the spot.

“During Holy Week, a monk having come to dine at the château, M. de Voltaire said to him, ‘Father D——, I desire, for example’s sake, to commune next Sunday; I think that you will willingly give absolution for that.’ ‘Very willingly,’ replied the monk; ‘I give it to you.’ Nothing more was said. The priest ate, drank, and went his way.

“On Easter Sunday M. de Voltaire said to me, ‘Now that I am alone and without hindrance, I wish, in my character of seigneur of the place, to go and commune at the parish church; will you go with me? I desire, also, to lecture a little those scoundrels who steal continually.’ I replied to him that I should be very curious to see him commune; but that, as far as my knowledge went, being a Protestant, I did not believe that he had a right to speak in the church, and I begged him with the greatest earnestness to abstain from a proceeding which I thought dangerous for him. He refused me.

“I accompanied him to the church, walking behind a superb Blessed Loaf, which he was in the habit of giving every year on Easter Sunday. After the distribution of this bread, and after having communed, he began to speak to the congregation of the theft committed some days before, addressing to them vigorous, eloquent, and pathetic remonstrances, and exhorting them to the practice of virtue. Then the priest, who was near the balustrade, turned round abruptly, and made only one leap to the altar (showing much ill-humor), to continue the service. Our orator, perceiving this, addressed to the auditors some words complimentary to their pastor, and was then silent.

“Some one wrote to the Bishop of Anneci, who styled himself Prince and Bishop of Geneva, that M. de Voltaire had mounted the pulpit on Easter Sunday, and had pronounced there a long sermon upon theft. In consequence, the bishop wrote on this subject to the seigneur of Ferney, who replied to him. The prelate sent the correspondence to the King of France through the Duke de la Vrillière,

with a petition for the arrest of the said seigneur of Ferney. At Versailles they laughed at this proceeding, and the Duke de la Vrillière [assiduous courtier of Madame Dubarry] sent the whole correspondence to M. de Voltaire, and told him also of the gentle priest's request. The bishop then forbade every curate, priest, and monk of his diocese to confess, absolve, or give the communion to the seigneur of Ferney, without his express orders, under pain of interdiction.

"Next Easter, 1769, M. de Voltaire, while dictating to me in bed, saw some one walking in his garden. He asked me who it was. I replied to him that it was the curé of Ferney, with a Capuchin of Gex, who had come to help him confess the people.

"Is it true," he then said to me, "that the Bishop of Anneci has forbidden the priests to confess me and administer to me the communion?" I replied to him, "Yes." "Very well," said he, "since that is so, I have a fancy to confess and commune in spite of him. I even wish not to go to church, but that everything may be done in my chamber and in my bed, in order to give the good bishop a greater pleasure. That will be very pleasant; and we shall see which of the two, the bishop or myself, will carry the day. Go and find this Capuchin for me. Have you any money about you?" "Yes." "Put a new crown-piece upon my night-table, so that my guest can see it."

"I obeyed, and went immediately to seek the Capuchin, who came back with me, and I introduced him. M. de Voltaire said to him, 'Father, this is Holy Week. I, also, should wish, at such a time, to fulfill my duties as a Frenchman, as an officer of the king, and as seigneur of a parish; but I am too ill to be transported to the church, and I pray you to receive my confession here.' Then he placed the crown of six francs in the hand of the Capuchin, who was struck as with a clap of thunder at the unexpected proposition which had just been made him. Nevertheless, he excused himself, saying there were at that moment several persons in the church waiting for him, but in three days he would return, and he prayed the good God to keep M. de Voltaire in these good and holy dispositions. Uttering these words, trembling like a leaf, he went out.

"During this interview, I remained at the door of the room, which I had left partly open. After the Capuchin had gone, I went in, and said to M. de Voltaire, laughing, 'You have not, then, been able to arrange your little affair?' 'No, *pardieu!*' he replied. 'The droll fellow went away as soon as he had got my six francs, promising to come and dispatch my business in three days, which he will certainly not do. But never mind. Let me alone for getting even with him.'

"During those three days he never left his bed, and the Capuchin

did not return. M. de Voltaire then sent to seek a certain Bugros, a kind of surgeon, and made him feel his pulse. Bugros said that he found the pulse excellent. 'How? *Mordieu!* ignoramus that you are!' replied M. de Voltaire, with his voice of thunder; 'you find my pulse good!' 'Ah, sir, permit me to feel it again. You have much fever,' said the poor surgeon, in no small alarm. '*Pardieu!*' said Voltaire, 'I knew very well that I had a fever; for three days I have been in this cruel condition. Go and tell the priest he ought to know what he has to do for a sick man, who, for more than three days, has had a fever as violent as this, and who is in danger of death.'

"We waited six days longer, in vain, for the Capuchin, and every day the surgeon went, on the part of M. de Voltaire, to inform the parish priest of the critical situation in which were the soul and body of the pretended invalid. At last, one fine night, he made all his servants get up at one o'clock in the morning, and sent us all together to the priest's house to notify him seriously of the danger in which our master was, and that he was unwilling to die without the solace usually given in such cases. I even carried to the clergyman the declaration below, signed by M. de Voltaire, by M. Bigex and myself, to which was joined a surgeon's certificate.¹

¹ Declaration sent to M. the curé of Ferney, March 30, 1769.

François-Marie de Voltaire, gentleman-in-ordinary of the king's chamber, lord of Ferney, Tournay, etc., in his seventy-sixth year, being of a very feeble constitution, having dragged himself to church on Palm Sunday, despite his sickness, and having since that day experienced several attacks of a violent fever, of which M. Bugros, surgeon, has notified the pastor of Ferney, according to the laws of the kingdom, and the said invalid finding himself totally incapable of going to confess and commune at the church for the edification of his vassals, which it is both his duty and desire to do, as well as for the edification of the Protestants, by whom this region is surrounded, prays M. the pastor of Ferney to do on this occasion all that which the ordinances of the king and the decrees of the parliament command, conjointly with the canons of the Catholic church, professed in the kingdom, — the religion in which the said invalid was born, has lived, and wishes to die, and of which he desires to fulfill all the duties, as well as those of a subject of the king; offering to make all the necessary declarations, all the requisite protestations, whether public or private, submitting himself absolutely to whatever is of rule, not wishing to omit any of his duties, whatever they may be; inviting M. the pastor of Ferney to fulfill his with the greatest exactitude, as well for the edification of the Catholics as of the Protestants, who are in the house of the said invalid.

The present writing signed by his hand, and by the hands of two witnesses, a copy of it remaining at the château signed also by the invalid and the same two witnesses; the original and another copy left in the hands of the said pastor of Ferney by the two witnesses undersigned, with intent to render them authentic by the hand of a notary, if need be. The thirtieth of March, one thousand seven hundred and sixty-nine, at ten o'clock in the morning.

Signed,

VOLTAIRE,

and subscribed, BIGEX and WAGNIÈRE, witnesses.

“Meanwhile, I feared much that M. de Voltaire, by force of wishing to be sick, would at last become so in reality. Despite all these proceedings and all these notifications, the priest would not come near the invalid, and the Capuchin did not return. Then a lawyer was sent for, who went, on the part of the pretended dying man, to say to the pastor that he would be obliged to denounce him to the parliament for refusal of the sacraments; that if he persisted in not complying with the invitation which had been given him he might finish by being put in prison, and perhaps punished more rigorously. The poor curate was seized with so great a terror at the alternative of interdiction or imprisonment that he was attacked upon the instant with a violent colic, of which he died some months after. A few days before he expired, I was sent by my master to inquire respecting his health, when he avowed to me that his sickness dated from that hour, and that he felt he should not long resist the revolution which had occurred in him at that time.

“The 31st of March M. de Voltaire made a further declaration before a notary, setting forth, in legal form, that WHEREAS a certain Nonotte, formerly a Jesuit, so called, and a certain Guyon, calling himself abbé, had made against him libels as insipid as calumnious, in which they accused the said M. de Voltaire of having failed in respect for the Catholic religion, THEREFORE he owes it to truth, to his honor, to his piety, to declare that he has never ceased to respect and to practice the Catholic religion professed in the kingdom; that he pardons his calumniators; that if ever there had escaped him any indiscretions prejudicial to the religion of the state he would ask pardon for it from God and from the state; and that he has lived, and wishes to die, in the observance of all the laws of the kingdom, and in the Catholic religion intimately connected with those laws.

“The priest of the parish then caused the Capuchin to be notified that it was absolutely necessary for him to come, and at last he arrived on the 1st of April. During this interval, Father Joseph and the priest had dispatched an express to the bishop to get his instructions and orders respecting the demand of the seigneur of Ferney, in case he persisted in his resolution; and those orders had reached the Capuchin. The good father, seeing no longer any obstacle from the bishop, and consenting to accept the invitation which had been made him, was introduced by me into the chamber of the pretended invalid. I left the door of this apartment ajar, and took my station in the study adjoining.

“The Capuchin was half dead with fear. M. de Voltaire began by saying to him, ‘Father, I do not remember too well my *Confiteor* in the present condition of my health; say it, as well as the *Credo*, and I

will repeat it after you.' This was done, but in a manner to make any one burst with laughter; for it was a salmagundi of the *Pater*, *Credo*, *Confiteor*, and of different other offices, of which neither he, nor I, nor the Capuchin, understood anything. The Capuchin, however, was too much disturbed in his mind to notice the confusion. Afterwards, the invalid said: 'Listen. I do not go to mass as often as is required, but it is my continual sufferings which hinder me from it; I adore God in my chamber. I do no ill to any one, and I try to do as much good as possible. Of the truth of this I call to witness God, my parishioners, my servants, and the inhabitants of the province; so I pray you to give me absolution.' 'But they say,' replied the confessor, 'that you have written some bad books against the good God, the Holy Virgin, and the priests; for my part, I know nothing about it, except by hearsay. I shall be obliged, then, to ask you just to sign this little paper, which is nothing but a simple profession of faith.' He then drew from his pocket the profession of faith, which the bishop had sent him.

"The invalid replied to him, 'Have we not recited the Apostles' Creed, which contains the whole? We ought, as good Catholics, to confine ourselves to that, without which we might with reason be accused, both you and I, of innovation, and that would be no joke, as you well know.' For ten minutes the Capuchin, at intervals, presented the profession of faith to M. de Voltaire to sign, and he, without even so much as looking at it, kept replying to him that he confined himself to the Creed, which he had already recited.

"At last, the penitent began to deliver to his confessor, with vivacity and with the greatest eloquence, a long remonstrance, very touching, very pathetic, upon calumny, morals, and the tolerance which all men ought to have for one another. The confessor, at every phrase, at every period, more dead than alive, with tears in his eyes, kept putting forward the profession of faith for the penitent to sign, but in vain. M. de Voltaire, having played a long time with the distress of his confessor, sternly said to him, at length, 'Give me absolution at once!' The Capuchin, utterly confounded, and not knowing really what to reply to him, pronounced the *Absolvo*, and put the paper back into his pocket. This is all about that confession, of which so much has been said, and of which such different accounts have been given.

"Then M. de Voltaire, knowing that the parish priest still performed all his functions (for he was tormented with his colic only at intervals), demanded that he should come instantly, and administer the communion. The curate arrived, with some persons who accompanied the holy sacrament. I had summoned, on the part of the penitent, the notary, Raffo. At the very instant that the priest gave the wafer to M. de Voltaire, he, raising his voice, pronounced these words:

‘Having my God in my mouth, I declare that I pardon sincerely those who have written calumnies against me to the king, and who have not succeeded in their base design; and I demand a record of my declaration from Raffo, the notary.’ Raffo wrote it upon the spot, in the presence of the pastor and of all those who had entered with him into the chamber of the sick man; after which, all withdrew.

‘Scarcely were all these people gone out of the château, when M. de Voltaire, with whom I alone remained, said to me, leaping briskly out of his bed (whence, a moment before, he seemed not to be able to budge), ‘I have had a little trouble with this comical genius of a Capuchin; but that was only for amusement, and to accomplish a good purpose. Let us take a turn in the garden. I told you I would be confessed and commune in my bed, in spite of M. Biord.’

‘As soon as the pastor of the parish had reached his own house with the confessor, he asked the latter, eagerly, if the penitent had signed the paper of monseigneur the bishop. The Capuchin, still trembling, and still moved by the eloquent discourse of the invalid, replied, ‘No.’ ‘Ah, my God!’ cried the priest, ‘we are ruined with monseigneur! What shall we do? What will become of us? What shall we say, Father Joseph? Alas, I cannot tell!’ ‘No more can I,’ said the Capuchin. ‘It is a strange man, this M. de Voltaire; I could not get him to listen to reason respecting monseigneur’s paper, and absolutely I could draw nothing from him except the *Confiteor*, the *Credo*, and a terrible sermon which he preached to me, and by which you see me still frightened out of my senses.’ ‘Heavens!’ said the priest, ‘what will monseigneur say?’ For fifteen days these two men sought the means of getting themselves out of the scrape, and of avoiding interdiction. They could think of nothing better than this expedient: On the 15th of April they summoned seven witnesses, whom they persuaded to declare upon oath, before the notary, Raffo, that they had been present, and had heard M. de Voltaire, before communing, pronounce a very orthodox and complete confession of faith, and that the whole was for the greater glory of God and the edification of the faithful.

‘A copy of this confession, which was a forgery, they sent to the bishop, duly attested, and in legal form.

‘Some time after, by order of monseigneur of Ancei, they caused all these pieces to be printed. I told M. de Voltaire of it, and he replied to me, ‘I do not wish to cause eight or nine persons to be hanged, although they have forged a paper which is ridiculous and completely false; I limit myself to pitying them. If priests in this age have been capable of a proceeding so infamous, think what they must have been capable of doing in the times of ignorance and barbarism!’

“He sent for the pretended witnesses who had signed, and who had not been in his house at the time. He represented to them how criminal their conduct had been. They entreated him to pardon them, and gave him a statement of the manner in which they had been seduced. Indeed, they had not lent themselves to the purposes of these priests except under the impression that their conduct would be as useful to M. de Voltaire himself as it was necessary to the two ecclesiastics, who were in danger only for having conformed to his will. M. de Voltaire, therefore, had little trouble in pardoning them, as we see in one of his letters, in which he speaks merrily enough to one of his friends of all that passed on this occasion.”¹

Thus Wagnière. He omitted one ludicrous incident of this battle between his lord and the Bishop of Anneci. One of the bishop's accusations against his adversary was that, at his table at Ferney, he indulged in scandalous conversation. Soon after, a magistrate of the diocese dining with him, Voltaire had one of Massillon's sermons read to the company, after the fashion of a convent, which led to much entertaining discourse upon Massillon and his times, ever a favorite topic with the master of the feast. The anecdote found its way into print, and excited much comment. The common version ran that Voltaire had adopted the *practice* of having Massillon read after dinner.

In the Voltairean correspondence of this year, 1769, along with many letters for the Sirvens, are several epistles confirmatory of Wagnière's strange tale. There are two notes addressed to the curé of Ferney, demanding his legal rights as a penitent and an invalid. One was this: “The ordinances direct that, upon the third access of fever, the sacraments are to be given to a sick person. M. de Voltaire has had eight violent ones; he notifies Monsieur the curé of Ferney of the fact.”² There is also a letter to the bishop, written in the name of the absent Madame Denis, which testifies that her uncle was doing “more good to the province than any man in office had done in several centuries: he was draining all the swamps which infected the country; he was lending money without interest to gentlemen, and giving money to the poor; he was establishing schools where there had never been any; he

¹ 1 Mémoires sur Voltaire, par Longchamp et Wagnière, 70. (Paris, 1826.)

² 2 Lettres Inédites de Voltaire, 168.

was renewing barren lands; he was maintaining more than a hundred persons; he had rebuilt a church." On the other hand, some of the parish priests of the province, she said, were vexing the people with exactions and lawsuits, fleecing and bleeding their flocks, instead of feeding and comforting them. "In the name of God," she cried, "put an end to these scandals and deeds of violence!"

In a letter of July 7, 1769, to D'Argental, who disapproved this mode of making war upon *l'Infâme*, Voltaire defended himself with seriousness and at length. "The Bishop of Ancei, he said, was an extreme bigot, who, when he was a parish priest in Paris, had supported the *billets de confession* with infuriate zeal, — a man deaf to reason and to justice in any affair involving his sect, "one of the most malignant persons breathing."

"He was arranging for me [he continued] a formal excommunication, which would have made a terrible noise. He did more: he was taking measures to have me accused before the parliament of Dijon of having written some very impious works. I know well that I should have confounded the accuser before God and men; but such suits are like those in which ladies plead for separation, — they are always suspected. In all this business I took no step except with the advice of two advocates. I always kept my own curé and parish in my interest. Moreover, I have in all things conformed to the laws of the kingdom. With regard to Massillon, I simply seized the opportunity when a president of the parliament of Dijon was dining with me; and it was a fair reply to the charge of holding licentious and unlawful discourse at my table which the scoundrel brought against me. In a word, it was necessary for me to fight this man with his own weapons. . . . I spare you, my dear angel, the details, which would demand a volume, and which would give you an insight into the spirit of the priesthood, if you did not know it perfectly well already. I am in a position sufficiently embarrassing. All I can say to you is that I have some influential protectors at Rome. All this much amuses me, and, in that quarter, I am in a security the most perfect. . . . I beg you to let Madame Denis read this letter. I cannot write to her by this post."

His position was indeed "embarrassing." To any man less adroit or more scrupulous than himself it would have been instantly fatal. His tactics were very simple: to assail *l'Infâme* unceasingly, and to secure his own safety through the

favor of the only two persons in the world who could protect him, namely, the woman who governed the king and the man who governed that woman.

Perhaps, in fairness, I should add that the letters which the Bishop of Anneci wrote to Voltaire, remonstrating against his conduct in the church, were such as a bishop ought to have written in the circumstances. The correspondence between these two men, one representing the past, and the other the future, was very long, and Voltaire's part of it was only too ingenious.

“If [wrote the bishop in his first letter, April 11, 1768], on the day of your communion, you had been seen, not thrusting yourself forward to preach to the people in the church upon robbery and theft, which much scandalized all who were present, but convincing them, like another Theodosius, by your sighs, your groans, and your tears, of the purity of your faith, the sincerity of your repentance, and the reality of the disavowal of whatever has been unedifying in your past ways of thinking and acting, then no one would have been justified in regarding as equivocal your demonstrations in favor of religion. You would have been thought more fit to approach that holy table, which the Faith does not permit even the purest souls to draw near, except with a religious fear; your parishioners would have been more edified to see you there, and perhaps you would yourself have derived more advantage from the act. But whatever may have been your past conduct, which I ought to leave to the judgment of the Sovereign Scrutinizer of hearts and consciences, it will be the fruits by which we shall judge of the quality of the tree; and I hope by your future course that you will give no reason to doubt the integrity and sincerity of what you have already done. I persuade myself of this the more easily, because I desire it with the greatest ardor, having nothing more at heart than your salvation, and not being able to forget that, as your pastor, I must render an account to God of your soul, as of all those of the flock which has been confided to me by Divine Providence.”

Voltaire replied to this letter promptly and at some length, feigning not to understand the bishop:—

“Your letter [he wrote, April 15th] gives me much satisfaction, but it has a little astonished me. How could you object to my doing the duties of which every seigneur ought to give an example upon his estates, which no Christian ought to omit, and which I have so often performed? It is not enough for him to snatch his vassals from the

horrors of poverty, to encourage their marriages, to contribute as far as in him lies to their temporal happiness; it is necessary to edify them also; and it would be extraordinary indeed if the seigneur of a parish should not do in the church which he has built what all the self-styled 'Reformed' do in their temples, after their manner. Assuredly, I do not merit the compliments which you have been pleased to pay me any more than I have merited the calumnies of the insects of literature, who are despised by all honest people, and whose existence ought not to be recognized by a man of your character. I ought to despise impostures without, however, hating the impostors. The more a man advances in age, the more it is necessary for him to banish from his heart all that could embitter it; and the best course that he can take against calumny is to forget it. Every man owes some self-sacrifices; every man knows that all the little incidents which can trouble this transient life are lost in eternity, and that resignation to God, the love of our neighbor, justice, beneficence, are the only things which remain to us in the presence of the Creator of all things. Without that virtue which Cicero calls *caritas generis humani*, man is only the enemy of man; he is nothing but the slave of his self-love, of empty grandeur, of frivolous distinctions, of pride, of avarice, and of all the passions. But if he does what is right because he loves the right, if this duty (purified and consecrated by Christianity) dominates in his heart, he can hope that God, before whom all men are equal, will not reject the sentiments of which he is the eternal source. Together with you, I annihilate myself before him, not unmindful of the forms established among men. I have the honor to be, with respect, etc.

"P. S. You are too well informed not to know that in France the seigneur of a parish ought, in giving the Blessed Loaf, to inform his vassals of a theft recently committed, and burglarious in its character, and to provide for the case instantly, just as he ought to notify them if a fire broke out in the village, and set them to bringing water. These are matters of police which appertain to him."¹

The bishop replied to this in the same strain as before, and denied the legal right of the lord of a parish to enter a church in time of service and harangue the congregation. His antagonist *would* not understand the real ground of the bishop's remonstrances: —

"The bagatelles of literature [wrote Voltaire] have nothing to do with the duties of the citizen and the Christian; literature is only an

¹ 88 Œuvres de Voltaire, 57.

amusement. Active beneficence, piety that is solid and not superstitious, the love of our neighbor, resignation to God, — these ought to be the principal occupations of every man who thinks seriously. So far as I am able, I endeavor to fulfill all these obligations in my retreat, which I render every day more profound. But my human weakness ill sustaining my efforts, I annihilate myself once more with you before Divine Providence, knowing that we can bring before God only three things which can enter into his immensity: our nothingness, our faults, and our repentance. I recommend myself to your prayers, as much as to your justice.”

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A FIRE OF THIRTY-SOUS BOOKS.

“WHAT harm can a book do that costs a hundred crowns ?” asked Voltaire once, apropos of the hostility of the French government to the Encyclopædia. “Twenty volumes folio,” he continued, “will never cause a revolution ; it is the little portable volumes of thirty sous that are to be feared. If the gospel had cost twelve hundred sesterces, the Christian religion would never have been established.”¹

The history of civilization, which is the history of the influence of a few little books, is a continuous illustration of this truth ; and it remains a truth in our own day of the steam newspaper. From early life Voltaire had acted upon his knowledge of it ; but, during the last twenty years of his existence, while he was engaged hand to hand with *l'Infâme*, he expended his force chiefly upon pamphlets and portable volumes. Baron Grimm speaks of the works issuing from the “manufactory of Ferney.” Let us say, rather, in our own language, that he constituted himself a complete Tract Society, being at once author, manager, advertiser, and distributor. He assailed his enemy with every form of printed thing, — essays, tales, burlesques, comedies, sermons, prayers, tragedies, commentaries, speeches, epistles, dialogues, histories, memoirs, poems, translations, reviews, eulogies, pleas, and arguments. The whole number of his publications during his life was about two hundred and sixty-five, of which one hundred and sixty were written after his sixtieth year. By far the greater part of these works of his old age were little books distinctly aimed at the foe which he had undertaken to crush. It is obviously impossible to give here any adequate account of this wonderful mass of composition. The reader must have recourse to the catalogue and to the works themselves. Among them, however, there are some that must be briefly noticed.

¹ Voltaire to Damilaville, April 5, 1765.

A large number of the pamphlets related to his defense of the Calas family, the Sirvens, Madame de Bombelles, La Barre, Lally, and others of his martyred clients; others were on topics suggested by them, such as the "Treatise upon Tolerance" mentioned above. Some were aimed at conspicuous defenders of the faith, like Le Franc de Pompignan, of ludicrous memory. Others resulted from his residence in and near Geneva, where for the first time he saw a people over whom the Bible exercised an authority similar to that of the infallible Pope over Catholics. The famous "Sermon of the Fifty" was one of these, — a little work in which he gives the proceedings of an imaginary club of Genevans, who groaned under the despotism of a book. He had a particular reason for making this Sermon a small work (fifty pages or so); for it was designed to neutralize the effect of a large one, the "Emile" of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, published originally, in 1762, in four volumes. Embedded in Rousseau's work was the "Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar," in which the author contrived to gratify and disgust, by turns, all classes of his readers, deists, atheists, Calvinists, and Catholics. "Emile" enjoyed the distinction of being burnt by the hangman, both at Geneva and at Paris, besides being anathematized at Rome, and having this "Sermon of the Fifty" hurled at it from Ferney.

"Emile" was such a mixture of rhapsody and eloquence, of folly and good sense, as we ought to expect from a man of Rousseau's talents when he writes upon education, after having taken the precaution to preserve his total ignorance of the subject by sending his five children to the foundling hospital as soon as they were born. This left his pen free to range over the whole field, unchecked and untrammelled. There is one man in the world who can tell us something valuable about education: it is he who has successfully educated. The Savoyard Vicar discoursed upon religion, and he did so in a manner that pleased everybody and satisfied nobody. He was a deist, but he insulted the "philosophers." "There is not one among them," he remarks, "who would not prefer the lie discovered by himself to the truth found out by another. Where is the philosopher who, for his own glory, would not willingly deceive the whole human race? The essential thing with them is to think differently from the others." This was

true of one noted man only among the "philosophers" of that age, — Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

It was the Savoyard Vicar who gave utterance to that comparison, so famous in its day, so often repeated since, between Socrates and Christ; and it was he also who, after extolling the "Scriptures" as of an excellence beyond mortal compass, suddenly appalled the orthodox reader by saying that "this same gospel is full of things incredible, — of things which reason has in aversion, and which it is impossible for any man of sense to conceive or to admit." Who could suppose, upon reading such words as these, that the Savoyard Vicar to this day supplies the pulpits of the orthodox world with the most effective line of reasoning they now ordinarily present? "Yes," cried Rousseau; "if the life and death of Socrates were those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus were those of a God!" The whole passage is, in its way, incomparable; it falls in with the mood of a mind fatigued with controversy or distrustful of itself. Who but Rousseau, after such an utterance, would have let his pious readers down from their ecstasie elevation by coolly adding, "With all that, this same gospel is full of things incredible." The inference he draws from such a contradiction is that we must be "always modest and circumspect, my child, and respect in silence what we know not how either to reject or comprehend." For his own part, upon the elevation of the host in the mass, "I try to annihilate my reason before the Supreme Intelligence."

Voltaire read this strange and powerful production with mingled sorrow and approval, — sorrow that such limpid and engaging eloquence was lost to truth and man. Fifty pages of the Vicar, he said, he would like to bind in morocco, and cherish as a precious treasure; but "Emile," as a whole, he held in contempt as a mass of idle dream and senseless paradox. His "Sermon of the Fifty" quickly followed the appearance of the work, and was swiftly spread over Europe.

"Fifty persons," the little book began, "instructed, pious, and reasonable, have met every Sunday for a year past in a populous and commercial city. They offer prayers, after which a member of the society pronounces a discourse; then they dine, and after the repast a collection is made for the poor. Each member presides in his turn; it belongs to the

president to offer the prayer and to deliver the sermon. Here is one of those prayers and one of those sermons. If the seed of these words falls upon good ground, doubtless it will bear fruit."

The text of the sermon which follows might well have been, "The letter killeth;" for it is aimed at that literal interpretation of the biblical legends which has killed them for all good purposes, and made them a means of arresting the development of whole communities, some nations, and millions of minds. He adduces the interesting tale of Abraham and Isaac, the pleasing story of Adam and Eve, and those sublimest of all narratives, the four Gospels, as instances of this vulgarization of the treasures of the past. He shows that if those narratives are taken as history they are immoral and pernicious, and have, in fact, been utilized by priests in every age to keep the human mind submissive to mere authority. "You know, my brethren," remarks this original preacher, "what horror has seized us when we have read together the writings of the Hebrews, while directing our attention to the outrages upon purity, charity, good faith, justice, and universal reason, which we not only find in every chapter, but which, as a climax of misery, we find consecrated in them." Add fifty pages of examples drawn from the Old and New Testaments. The preacher concludes with a prayer:—

"May that great God who hears me, that God who assuredly could not have been the offspring of a girl [*fille*], nor have died upon a gibbet, nor have been eaten in a morsel of paste, nor have inspired those books filled with contradictions, falsehood, and horror; may that God, creator of all the worlds, have pity upon this sect of Christians who blaspheme him! May he recall them to the holy and natural religion, and bestow his blessing upon all the efforts we make to have him adored! *Amen.*"

Another "Sermon" appeared about the same time, purporting to be by the Jewish rabbi, Akib, upon the *auto-da-fe* of the "savages of Lisbon." The rabbi did not fail to notice that, while the Inquisitors were burning Jews, they were chanting a psalm of a king of the Jews: "Have mercy upon me, O my God, according to thy great mercy!"

A Dialogue quickly followed, "between a Greek Monk and

an Honest Man," in which the ideas of the "Sermon of the Fifty" were placed in a new setting. The monk feebly holds to the religion of his convent; the Honest Man strongly supports "the religion of nature," consisting of the adoration of God, justice and benevolence toward men. The Dialogue ends happily:—

MONK. — "I serve God according to the usage of my convent."

HONEST MAN. — "And I according to my conscience. It tells me to fear him, and to love monks, dervishes, bonzes, and talopains, and to regard all men as my brothers."

MONK. — "Come, come, monk as I am, I think as you do."

HONEST MAN. — "My God, bless this good monk!"

MONK. — "My God, bless this honest man!"

In 1764 appeared a volume entitled "Dictionnaire Philosophique Portatif," the beginning of that Philosophical Dictionary which now occupies eight solid volumes of his works. Among the larger prose writings of this inexhaustible man, the Philosophical Dictionary is probably the one which will be the last to become obsolete. The shortness of the articles, the variety of the subjects, the singleness of the object, the wide range of knowledge, the equally interesting ignorance, the ingenuity, the elegance, the mingled audacity and reserve, the earnestness and passion, and, above all, the humor, the wit, the fun, of this collection, render it one of the standard reservoirs of entertainment to all Christendom. It were a pity to have another work of the kind, if that were possible. As Lucian's Dialogues sufficed for the ancient world, so this "Dictionnaire" furnishes the modern nations with an abundance of the same ingredient. But Lucian is mere burlesque. In the work of Voltaire there is burlesque enough, but there is everything else besides. It is the whole of citizen Voltaire: his strength and his weakness, his thoughts and his feelings, his goodness and his faults, his extent and his limits, his seriousness and his gayety; the defender of Calas and the courtier of Dubarry, the philosopher, the child, the Frenchman, and the man, — all are here.

It is the blending of the lightest banter with the weightiest admonition that renders the "Dictionnaire Philosophique" the incomparable repository. The public devoured the first in-

stallment with an avidity not often exemplified. It was printed in one thin octavo volume, in July, 1764, and copies began to get abroad in September. In December, the second edition appeared, with eight new articles. In March, 1765, the parliament of Paris had it burned by the hangman; in July of the same year Rome paid it the homage of its anathema; and before that year ended the fifth edition was published in London. In 1766 it was signally advertised by being cast into the flames which consumed the body of the heroic Chevalier de la Barre; and early in the next year it was enlarged to two volumes, octavo. Under various forms and names it continued to be the receptacle of the "chips" from the Voltairean workshop; and it remains to this day part of the current literary merchandise of the world, seldom exhibited, frequently sold, continually read. It was the complement of the Encyclopædia of Diderot, since it contained, in the most captivating form, all that the censors of that work were obliged to exclude.

The author much enjoyed the dangerous game of getting this work before the public. No other man in Europe could have done it. As early as July, 1764, he begins, in his jocular manner, to disavow the book, not yet obtainable. "Yes," he writes to D'Alembert, "I have heard that abominable Dictionary spoken of; it is a work of Satan. Be sure, if I can manage to unearth one, you shall have a copy. Happily, I have no part in this hateful work. I am innocence itself, and you will do me justice on this occasion." D'Alembert replies in the same tone, and Voltaire resumes: "Indeed, I have read that *Dictionnaire Diabolique*. It has terrified me, as it has you; but the climax of my affliction is that some Christians are so little worthy of that beautiful name as to suspect me of being the author of a work so anti-Christian. Alas! I have scarcely been able to get a copy of it." D'Alembert rejoins: —

"It is evident, as you say, that this alphabetical abomination is the work of different hands. For my part, I have recognized at least four, those of Beelzebub, Astaroth, Lucifer, and Asmodeus; for the Angelic Doctor, in his 'Treatise upon the Angels and Devils,' has very well proved that these are four different persons, and that Asmodeus is not consubstantial with Beelzebub and the others. After all, since it takes three

poor Christians to make the 'Journal Chrétien' (for there are as many engaged upon that edifying work), I do not see why it should require less than three or four poor devils to make a *Dictionnaire Diabolique*."

The Calvinists of Geneva were deeply moved by the irruption of this *Portatif* into their republic. It was well for the author that he had provided for himself a safer refuge than Les Délices; for, in Geneva, there was no Dubarry to interpose her lovely arms for his protection. The pastor Gaberel has an amusing passage upon the struggles of the Genevan magistrates and clergy to defend their people from the *Dictionnaire*, as well as from the pelting hail of the smaller portatives. Gaberel, apparently, enjoyed the telling of the story, not, perhaps, without some sympathy with the adroit and invincible foe of his brethren.

"Numerous copies [he says] arrived at Geneva in September, 1764. At once, M. Tronchin, upon the report of the consistory, caused the parcels to be seized, and the council declared the book impious, scandalous, audacious, and destructive of religion. . . . Meanwhile, M. Tronchin, visiting Ferney, reproached Voltaire with the publication of that work, and told him that it might well be publicly burned by the hangman. 'Truly,' replied he, 'one would believe that you regret having burned the "Emile" of Jean-Jacques, and that you wish to stand well with the mechanics, his friends.' 'You depart from the question,' replied Tronchin. 'Withdraw that book, require of your accomplices the return of all the copies, or I shall be under an obligation to issue against you the most disagreeable requisition; and I notify you that, at the present moment, the ministers of the King of France are little disposed in your favor.'

"Voltaire shrugged his shoulders; but the next day he wrote to the council a letter which might form a companion-piece to that which he had formerly sent them, apropos of Jeanne Dare. 'I am obliged,' wrote he, 'to inform the Magnificent Council that, among the pernicious libels with which this city is inundated, all of which are printed at Amsterdam by Michael Rey, there will arrive on Monday next, at the book-store of Chirol, of Geneva, a parcel containing some copies of the "Philosophical Dictionary," the "Gospel of Reason," and others, which I despise as much as I do the "Letters from a Mountain," of the Sieur Rousseau. I believe I am doing my duty in giving you this information, and I submit it entirely to the wisdom of the Council, who will know how to repress all infractions of the public peace and good order.'

“But Voltaire, Chirol, and Gando (booksellers of Geneva) agreed to employ a device familiar to literary contrabandists, as to others. While the police seized the parcels of Chirol, a large cargo passed the frontiers at another point, to the address of Gando, who could thus furnish Geneva with an abundant supply of the prohibited goods. M. Tronchin, indignant at the trick played upon him by Voltaire, launched against him one of the most energetic of requisitions, and his work was burned by the hand of the executioner, September 26, 1764.

“This vigilance and severity appearing excessive to Voltaire, he endeavored to escape the embarrassment by means of a most malicious ruse. He had his saddest productions printed under religious titles, or, at least, with titles to deceive at the first glance. In order to delude better the Genevan authorities, he took pains to begin most of these pamphlets by three or four pages of the best savor, and which served as introduction to the most unworthy blasphemies. He used the titles of ‘Philosophic Almanac,’ ‘Serious Thoughts upon God,’ ‘Sermons of the Reverend Jacques Rossetes,’ ‘Homily of the Pastor Bourne,’ ‘Gospel of the Day,’ ‘Letters of a Candidate to the Pastor De Roches,’ ‘Address of the Pastors of Geneva to their Colleagues,’ ‘Counsels to Fathers of Families,’ ‘Letter upon the Holy Land, establishing the Reality of the Miracles of Jesus Christ.’ Thus he emptied upon Geneva all the arsenal of his unbelief.

“The Consistory, however, kept good watch; the pastors multiplied their visits, and entreated the heads of families not to buy those bad books. But Voltaire, in order to baffle this ecclesiastical surveillance, invented means wherein burlesque disputed the palm with impudence. Attention once called to the trick of the false titles, the sale at the booksellers became impossible. Voltaire, who wished to continue his work, though at the price of great sacrifices of money, distributed *gratis* his productions, employing to this end all the little manœuvres he could imagine. Genevans, entirely devoted to him, some belonging to the highest, others to the lowest classes of society, had no scruple to second his views; and their services were completed by those of a troupe of colporteurs, liberally paid. At length, the pretended Sermons were found everywhere. On entering the shops, the confederates, under pretext of a little purchase, slipped some impious pamphlets among the papers or parcels. If they found young women serving at the counter, care was taken to choose writings best calculated to corrupt their imaginations. The colporteurs ascended the front steps of houses, and fastened these productions to the bell-pull, or slid them under the sill. Piles of them were found in the shops of the clock-makers, and the little errand-boys confessed that a gentleman had given them six sous to place the packets upon the

work-benches. Every evening, upon the seats of the public walks, were found some printed leaves, forgotten on purpose.

“Still worse, they succeeded in introducing them into the classrooms of the college, and children found these little pamphlets among their copy-books. Those who know the charm of mysterious things for the young can understand that these works were not given up to masters and parents until they had been read and devoured. The Voltairean propaganda went still farther: at the places where lessons in the Catechism were given, often the Catechisms were replaced by books bound in the same manner, and containing those perfidious Dialogues in which unbelief triumphs at pleasure over a Christian opponent. Copies of the Philosophical Dictionary were bound with the title and appearance of Psalms, and left upon the benches of the Madeleine Temple, for the use of young people.”¹

Upon referring to the works of Voltaire, the reader will find most of the pious titles mentioned by the pastor Gaberel, as well as several others, such as, “Epistle to the Romans,” “God and Men,” “The Adorers, or the Praises of God,” “The Bible Commented upon and Explained,” — titles necessary to conceal from the police the inculcation of Christian sentiments. The reader of to-day does not find those productions to be so “sad” as the worthy Swiss pastor describes them. They are not perfect works; there is much in them not suited to us, nor to our day; but the spirit of them is humane and reasonable, and there is a great deal in them that is altogether lovely and right. Instead of wearying the reader with a vain attempt to describe these works, I will endeavor to convey an idea of their spirit and intent by a few representative lines from some of them.

[God and men.] “Whoever dares to say, *God has spoken to me*, is criminal toward God and men; for God, the common father of all, would he have communicated himself to an individual? God to walk! God to talk! God to write upon a little mountain! God to fight! God to become man! God-man to die upon the cross! Ideas worthy of Punch! To invent all those things, the last degree of rascality! To believe them, the extreme of brutal stupidity! To substitute a God powerful and just in place of those astounding farces, extreme wisdom!”

[The curse of dogma.] “Of all the religions, which is the least bad? The one in which we find the least dogma and the most virtue.

¹ Voltaire et les Genevois, par J. Gaberel. Paris, 1757. Page 114.

Which is the best? It is the simplest. Dogma has caused to die in torments ten millions of Christians. The moral system has not produced one scratch. Dogma still carries division, hate, atrocity, into provinces, into cities, into families. O virtue, console us!" [God and Men. chapter xlv.]

[Plato the author of Christian doctrines.] "All the opinions of the first Christians were taken from Plato, even the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, which the ancient Jews never knew. The kingdom of heaven, which is spoken of so often in the gospel, is found in the 'Phædo' of Plato. Purgatory, especially, has been obviously taken from the 'Phædo.' The doctrine of the resurrection is also entirely Platonian, since in the tenth book of the 'Republic' Plato introduces Heres resuscitated and relating what had passed in the other world." [God and Men, chapter xlv.]

[Hell.] "All those with whom we have dealings are not such as the advocate who paid his clients the whole of the sum involved in a suit which had been lost through his neglect. All women are not like Ninon Lenclos, who guarded so religiously the money confided to her keeping, while the gravest personages betrayed their trust. In one word, gentlemen, everybody is not a philosopher. We have to do with many a rascal who has reflected little; with a crowd of insignificant people, who are brutal, drunkards, thieves. Preach to them, if you wish, that there is no hell, and that the soul is mortal. For my part, I will roar in their ears that they will be damned if they steal from me. I will imitate that country pastor, who, having been outrageously plundered by his flock, said to them in his sermon, 'I know not why Jesus Christ thought of dying for a pack of low scoundrels like you!'"

[Death.] "As for death, it is no more felt than sleep. The people who announce it in form are enemies of the human race; it is necessary to forbid them ever to come near us. Death is nothing at all; the thought of it alone is sad. Let us, then, never think of it, and let us live from day to day." [To Madame du Deffand, 1761.]

[Could he be mistaken?] "The nearer my old age and the weakness of my constitution bring me to the grave, the more I have thought it my duty to know if so many celebrated persons, from Jerome and Augustine to Pascal, might not be partly in the right. I have seen clearly that they were not, and that they were only subtle and vehement advocates of the worst of all causes." [To Madame du Deffand.]

[God.] "Men, as all the philosophers of antiquity said, have made God in their own image. This is why the first Anaxagoras, as ancient as Orpheus, expressed himself thus in his verses: 'If the birds imagined a God, he would have wings; the God of horses would run upon

four legs.' The vulgar conceive God as a king who holds his bed of justice in his court. Tender hearts represent him to themselves as a father who takes care of his children. The wise attribute to him no human affection. They recognize a power, necessary, eternal, which animates all nature, and they resign themselves." [Discours de M. Bel-lequier.]

Such ideas as these he illustrated by every kind of diverting tale, anecdote, dialogue, and narration. He returns often to some of his topics; as, for example, to the inconvenience and demoralization resulting from the eighty-two idle days annually exacted by the church from all laborers.—fifty-two Sundays and thirty holidays. On those days, as he complains, his farmers could get drunk at the wine-shop without scandal, but if they presumed to prune the vines in the field, the curé was upon them, with the magistrate behind him. He is never weary of showing the absurdities to which people are reduced who accept as historical the prodigies and miracles which swarm in all ancient writings. He relates a story of a pious countess who has faith, as she believes, much larger than a grain of mustard seed, and yet cannot remove a very small mountain near her château. She has a pot of mustard brought upon the scene, which leads her reprobate husband to remark that "a miracle to-day is indeed *mustard after dinner*," a jest which "deranged all the devotion of madame." Calvin himself must have laughed at this story, as Voltaire relates it. It was a favorite device with him to present more abstruse topics in the form of a dialogue between a lady of rank and her maid, her tutor, her doctor, her pastor. Under "Maladie," in the Dictionnaire, there is a conversation between a beautiful young princess and her physician, in which regimen and moderation are exalted above medicine and medical skill. The science is of the most advanced, the *morale* is good, but the humor is incomparable.

Sown thick in his later writings are sentences that stick in the memory from their truth, or epigrammatic point. I select a few:

"I have always offered one prayer to God, which is very short. This is it: '*My God, render my enemies very ridiculous!*' God has heard me."

"The more you know, the less you are sure."

“As to the thunder, it is a bagatelle; we inoculate it, like the small pox.”

“A sure means of not yielding to the desire to kill yourself is to have always something to do.”

“Opinion rules the world, and wise men rule opinion.”

“All nature is nothing but mathematics.”

“To make a good book one must have a prodigious length of time and the patience of a saint.”

“They say that you [Marmontel] are going to be married. If the news is true, I congratulate you; if it is false, still I felicitate you.”

“There is an English tragedy which begins with these words: ‘Put money in your pocket, and laugh at the rest.’ That is not tragic, but there is much sense in it. This world is a great table, where people of understanding have good cheer; the crumbs are for the fools [*sots*].”

“The human race would be too unhappy if it were as common to commit atrocious things as it is to believe them.”

“Whoever has many witnesses of his death dies with courage.”

“Theology is in religion what poison is among the aliments.”

“Doctor Colladon, seeing the father of Tronchin praying more devoutly than usual, said to him, ‘Sir, you are going to fail; pay me.’”

“Most men die without having lived.”

“Inscription for a picture representing beggars: *Rex fecit.*”¹

“Who ought to be the king’s favorite? The people.”

“It is necessary to have a religion and not believe the priests, as it is necessary to have a regimen and not believe the doctors.”

“Having it clearly in your heart that all men are equals, and in your head that the exterior distinguishes them, you can get on very well in the world.”

“I know no great men except those who have rendered great services to the human race.”

“Yes, without doubt, peace is of more value than truth; that is to say, we must not vex our neighbor by arguments; but it is necessary to seek the soul’s peace in truth, and to tread under foot the monstrous errors which would perturb it, and render it the prey of knaves.”

The eye of the reader is occasionally arrested by a tabular statement, or array of figures; for he knew every device for alluring the languid mind. Thus, we have in “*Dieu et les Hommes*” a catalogue of the “murders committed in the name

¹ The king made them.

of Jesus," from Constantine to Louis XIV., ending with the sum total of victims, 9,468,800; all of whom were either "hanged, drowned, broken on the wheel, or burned, for the love of God." He insists that under the Romans there were but few persecutions of Christians, and those not very destructive of life; but, that under the sway of the Popes and bishops, religion became crueller with each century, until, from Leo X. onward, it inundated both continents with human blood. Then, "in several provinces wood was made dear by the number of burnings at the stake, and in several countries the executioners were fatigued with their work." And all this woe, agony, and desolation grew out of the insensate claim of the priests to a supernatural revelation, though the human origin of all their dogmas had been traced and proved!

The reader may well ask, in wonder, how it was possible for an author, living on French soil, within the clutch of the most powerful hierarchy ever seen in the world, to print and circulate these little books, sending out a new one every two or three months for fifteen years or more. He gives the true answer to this question in the sentence quoted above: "Opinion rules the world." He had converted a great part of Europe to his way of interpreting the universe. The reading people were, as a class, the vassals of his mind, from the Empress Catherine and King Frederic to the voluble abbé of French supper tables, and the London apprentice who read the continuous extracts from M. de Voltaire in the "Annual Register." The voice of "good company" was on his side; the palaces and the bureaus were filled with his disciples. It is public opinion, after all, that maintains both hierarchies and dynasties. The Inquisition, we plainly see, was a highly popular institution in its day, and there is abundant proof that the massacres of St. Bartholomew were hailed with enthusiastic approval by the pious people of the south of Europe. Public opinion, from 1762 to the end of Voltaire's life, was on the side of the philosophers.

By that time, too, he had had forty years' practice in surreptitious publication. His latest French editors give us a list of his pseudonyms, *one hundred and eight in number*. He avowed nothing; he distinctly disavowed nearly everything. It was the "Archbishop of Canterbury" who wrote "a letter

to the Archbishop of Paris." As occasion suggested, he was "an Academician," "a Benedictine," "an advocate," "an ecclesiastic." If he had anything particularly heterodox to offer, he was very likely to attribute it to an abbé, a pastor, or a monk. Thus, for example, his "Bible Explained" was assigned to the Reverend Almoners of the King of Poland; his terrible "History of the Parliament of Paris," was attributed to the Abbé Bigorre; and several of his "Homilies" to the pastor Bourn. It was a Quaker who wrote un-Quakerlike "Letters to the Pompignans;" and the "Sermon preached at Bâle" was of course delivered by the Rev. Josias Rossette. "All in God" was attributed to the Abbé Tilladet; and the "Defense of Mylord Bolingbroke" was assigned to "Doctor Good-Natur'd Wellwischer." He used also the names of his friends: among others, Thieriot, Damilaville, and Bolingbroke. If these names deceived no one, they frequently amused the reader, and always deprived the hierarchy of the easiest handle to seize him by.

The printing and distribution of his little books were not so easy; but here again he was assisted by his long experience, as well as by his former residence in England, Holland, and Prussia. He personally knew several of the printers and publishers of those countries; and when he had something more than commonly contraband to spread abroad, he could rely upon the covert aid of the King of Prussia. We find him writing to Frederic in April, 1767:—

"If I were less old, and if I had health, I would leave without regret the château which I have built, the trees that I have planted, to go and end my life in the country of Clèves, with two or three philosophers, and to devote my last days, under your protection, to the printing of some useful books; but, sire, could you not, without compromising yourself, cause some booksellers of Berlin to be encouraged to reprint them, and to have them sold throughout Europe at a low price, which renders the sale of books easy?"

Frederic replied a few days after: "You can avail yourself of my printers at your pleasure; they enjoy entire liberty, and, as they are connected with those of Holland, France, and Germany, I do not doubt that they have ways of forwarding books wherever they think proper."

Thus, with printers at his own door, printers in Holland, Berlin, Lyons, and Paris, with publishers in London quick to discern profit in a book, with monarchs for allies and co-operators, with a revenue three or four times as great as his expenditure, with a vivacity of purpose which neither age nor toil could diminish, it is not surprising that he reached and convinced the disinterested portion of the educated class in all the more advanced countries. Everywhere he had allies, interested and disinterested. The booksellers, who received a huge package of contraband literature for nothing, and sold its contents at the price of lawful merchandise, were not ill pleased. The bewitching woman who amused the dull old French king defended the poet who celebrated her charms in classic verse. The *régime* was a house divided against itself, and he had learned how to use one half of it to protect himself against the other.

Sometimes he was a little too daring, and had a narrow escape. Wagnière has a story of a lady, the sister of the famous naval hero, Captain Thurot, coming from Paris to Geneva for "a cargo of Philosophical Dictionaries and other prohibited works."

"She consulted the philosopher of Ferney upon the means of getting them into France. His zeal for the spread of the light was so strongly kindled on this occasion that he lent his trunks, his carriage, his coachman, his postilion, and four horses to convey the whole in voice fifteen miles on the way to Paris, as far as the first custom-house. A clerk of the customs, who was under obligation to him, offered to go with the books himself, and promised to have the trunks officially sealed without being opened. The scoundrel, on the contrary, on reaching the custom-house, turned informer. The trunks, the carriage, the horses, all were seized. The sister of M. Thurot, after having defended herself with courage, made her escape from the guards. This mishap gave great uneasiness to M. de Voltaire, who believed himself in danger. Nevertheless, he escaped very happily from the affair through the influence of the Chancellor de Maupeou and M. de Malesherbes."

We see by his letters that he took the lofty tone in complaining of this disrespect to the equipage of "Madame Denis," and threatened dreadful things if the subordinate officials were not more discriminating in their conduct. The coach and

horses were returned to the lady of Ferney. He felt safe at last. "One of the bigot magistrates of Paris," he wrote soon after, "has said that he could not die content till he had seen a philosopher hanged. I can assure him that it is not I who will give him that pleasure."

At that period every letter passing through the mail was liable to be opened and read at a bureau organized for the purpose. In the correspondence of Voltaire there are countless allusions to the "Dictionnaire Philosophique," but among them all there is not one which could be used to fasten the authorship upon himself. In writing to his former secretary, Collini, to whom he had dictated many of the articles, or to the D'Argentals, his nearest friends, from whom he had no secrets, nay, to the very printers and publishers of the work, it was always, "Have you seen a curious volume, published lately, called 'Le Portatif,' very scandalous, and yet containing some things not altogether bad?" or, "How ridiculous to attribute such an *omnium gatherum* to me, sick as I am, when it is so evidently the work of many hands!" or, "That 'Portatif' you speak of I have not seen, but I am told that it was put together by a certain Dubut, formerly a student in theology;" or, "Can you pick me up a copy, somewhere, of that *Dictionnaire Diabolique*, which I still hear of occasionally?" Such forms he employed in writing to his most familiar friends, when, perhaps, he was consigning to them packages of the work. Another device was to publish several things at once, and thus, as he remarked, "to prove an *alibi*." In 1769 he hurries the printing of his tragedy of "Les Guèbres" for this reason; for, as he wrote to D'Argental, "it is physically impossible that I should have done all at once the 'History of the Age of Louis XV.,' 'Les Guèbres,' the 'History of the Parliament,' and another dramatic work, which you will see immediately. I have but one body and one soul, both very weakly; I should be obliged to have three to do what is attributed to me."

The reader perceives from this passage that, busy as he was with *l'Infâme*, he had not forgotten the scene of his early glory, the Théâtre-Français. He had lost some of the dramatist's skill, but none of his inextinguishable interest in the triumphs of the stage. "Olympie" (founded upon the story of Cassan-

dra), played at his own theatre in 1762, and produced in Paris in 1764 with moderate success, was an old subject with him; it was suddenly taken in hand again, and finished in a week, when he was sixty-nine years of age. "It is the work of six days," he wrote to D'Alembert. That genial and witty philosopher replied, "The author ought not to have rested on the seventh." Voltaire rejoined, "Also, it repents me of my work," and, soon after, sent him a version of the piece, much amended.

Then, in 1764, he produced a tragedy entitled the "Triumvirat," which was played and published without the name of the author, and without that degree of success which tempts an anonymous poet to avow his work. In 1767 he wrote "Les Scythes," of which, in the heat of composition, he conceived the highest hopes. It was an old device of his, generally successful hitherto, to contrast the manners of a hardy, poor, and free people like the Scythians of old, with those of a people like the Persians, corrupted by luxury and seritude. But his hand had in some degree lost it cunning; and, although this piece was received with respectful applause on its production, it was soon withdrawn.

In 1769 he composed "Les Guèbres, or La Tolérance," mentioned above, not designed for representation on the stage, and printed anonymously at Geneva. In order the better to conceal the authorship, he dedicated it to himself; for he was aware that the mere word "tolerance," as part of the title, was likely to betray the origin of a piece distinctly aimed at *l'Infâme*. The heroine, a beautiful young girl of the sect of fire-worshipers, falls into the hands of the Roman High Priest of Pluto, who condemns her to the stake for adoring the sun, — a fate from which she is rescued, after five acts of various anguish, by the august Emperor of Rome, the mighty Caesar, who not only saves the lovely maiden, but abolishes the arrogant and ruthless priest. The work contains telling lines, powerful passages, and effective scenes. Nevertheless, it was the work of a poet seventy-five years old, — of a poet, too, who had in his mind a line of High Priests who had perverted the policy of his government for generations. The piece had success with the public, but was never performed.

Nor must I omit all mention of his two comic operas of

1765, though neither of them ever saw the light of the stage candles. These gay little pieces were written for Grétry, who, on his return from Italy, where he had been studying music for two years, passed several months at Geneva, whence he frequently visited Ferney. Voltaire and his niece, after hearing him play some of his compositions upon the harpsichord, conceived the highest opinion of his talents, and urged him by all means to try his fortune at Paris. To afford him a better chance in the metropolis, Voltaire offered to write for him a comic opera, a kind of entertainment then in the highest vogue, to the detriment of the classic drama. He produced the "Baron d'Otrante" and the "Deux Tonneaux," which Grétry conveyed to Paris, and offered one of them to the Italian company as the first essay of a young man in the country. The actors declined the piece. They admitted, however, that the opera was not without merit, and that there was good promise in the work. They even engaged the composer to send word to the young man that, if he would come to Paris, they could point out to him some changes necessary to be made to fit his opera for representation; adding that, with docility and a little study of their performances, he might make himself of use to their theatre, and render himself worthy to be attached to it. The young author declined their invitation. Grétry, however, had a successful career in Paris as a composer of music, surviving the Revolution, and almost witnessing the collapse of the Bonaparte brigandage in 1814. He is still called the "creator of the comic opera of France."

In 1764, as if not yet sufficiently employed, Voltaire undertook to review foreign books for the "Gazette Littéraire," a rival to Fréron's abusive sheet. Among the English works reviewed by him were Algernon Sidney's Discourses upon Government, Lord Kames's Elements of Criticism, Lady Wortley Montagu's Letters, Churchill's Poems, Hume's History of England, Middleton's Life of Cicero, the Memoirs of Sir Robert Walpole, Lowth's Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews, and the romance of Julia Mandeville. He took very naturally the editorial tone, and assumed the editorial disguises with the ease of an old hand.

In his notice of Lord Kames's Elements of Criticism, there is some amusing banter upon the Scottish author's preference

of Shakespeare to all other dramatists and poets. We see clearly in this passage the reason why Frenchmen were so late in coming to the appreciation of Shakespeare. The two languages are of genius so radically different that the poetry and drama of each is untranslatable into the other. More than once Voltaire cites, as the last conceivable degree of the undignified, the opening scene of "Hamlet:"—

BERNARDO. — "Have you had quiet guard?"

FRANCISCO. — "Not a mouse stirring."

Voltaire's version of this colloquy betrays the secret of his disapproval of it: "Le soldat Bernardo demande au soldat Francisco si tout a été tranquille. *Je n'ai pas vu trotter une souris*, répond Francisco." He adduces also Hamlet's soliloquy, "Oh that this too, too solid flesh would melt," as a specimen of barbaric crudity too obviously absurd to require remark. He appends a translation, which, he says, is "almost line for line, and very exact:"—

" Oh ! si ma chair trop ferme ici pouvait se fondre,
Se dégeler, couler, se résoudre en rosée !
Oh ! si l'être éternel n'avait pas du canon
Contre le suicide ! . . . ô ciel ! ô ciel ! ô ciel !
Que tout ce que je vois aujourd'hui dans le monde
Est triste, plat, pourri, sans nulle utilité !
Fi ! fi ! c'est un jardin plein de plantes sauvages !"

The "Gazette Littéraire" ought to have flourished with such a contributor. It is to be feared it did not. "I do not hear your Gazette spoken of," he wrote to D'Argental, in March, 1764; "and I am afraid it will not last through the year. If it is wise, it is lost; if it is malign, it is odious. These are the two rocks; and as long as Fréron amuses idle people with his weakly malignities the public will neglect other periodicals, which are only useful and reasonable. Thus the world is constituted, and I am sorry for it."

CHAPTER XXXV.

HE IS A TROUBLESOME NEIGHBOR.

PRESIDENT DE BROSSÉ and other personages interested in the land of Gex speak of the lord of Ferney as a neighbor who kept the region in a broil. The austerer Calvinists of Geneva regarded him in the same light. Let us, then, view him for a moment in his character of neighbor, using the best light that can now be cast upon that remote time and scene. The Council of Geneva, as M. Gaberel has told us, burnt the Philosophical Dictionary by their hangman's hands, and the anonymous author of that work submitted to the affront with apparent docility. They had given him other proofs of regard which, perhaps, had their effect upon the course of events.

We should not forget, what M. Gaberel has also mentioned, that there were in Geneva and along the shores of the lake a considerable number of polite and educated families who were above the squabbles of a sect. With them, and particularly with his nearer lake neighbors, he appears to have lived on terms of agreeable familiarity, exchanging with them seeds, flowers, fruit, nuts, slips, vehicles, visits, compliments, all in the cordial fashion of country people shut out from the world with one another much of the year. Who would have expected information upon his neighborly character from New York? One of the families nearest to Ferney, and not far from Les Délices, was that of the Gallatins, a name of distinction for centuries in Switzerland and France; honorable now in the United States through Albert Gallatin and his descendants. They lived at Pregny, close to the lake shore, about midway between Ferney and Geneva, a mile and a half from both. They, too (and Madame Gallatin above all), were enthusiasts in gardening and fruit culture, a ruling taste with the lord of Ferney. For many years there was a very frequent interchange of notes, messages, and gifts between the

two houses; some of the notes being written upon scraps of paper and the backs of playing cards. "Dozens of these little billets in Voltaire's hand are still preserved," says the biographer of Albert Gallatin, who gives some specimens.¹ On the back of the dence of clubs he answers a note from Madame Gallatin, in which, as it seems, she had recommended a poor tinker for employment at the château. He seizes the chance to scribble on the card the latest news from Paris, — how the king was thriving in his contest (of 1756) with the parliament of Paris: —

"We are at the orders of Madame Gallatin. We shall try to employ tinker. Parliament Paris refuses all decree, and wishes the king to ask pardon of parliament Bezançon. English wished to bombard Havre again. Have not succeeded. Carriage at half past one. Respects."

Another note appears to be an answer to one from Madame Gallatin, in which she had expressed her regret not to have been at home when he called, and to have asked if he had had anything particular to say: —

"When V. presents himself at a lady-neighbor's house, he has no other business, no other object, than to pay his court to her. We are deferring the rehearsals until the return of the Tyrant, who has a cold on the chest. If there is any news from Berlin, M. Gallatin is entreated to communicate it. Thousand respects."

Another refers to the vintage of 1759. The smaller growers usually sold their grapes to a person who kept the apparatus of wine-making. Madame Gallatin and Voltaire appear to have sold their grapes to the same individual. He writes: —

"How is our invalid, our dear neighbor, our dear daughter? I have been to the vines, madame. The wasps are devouring all the grapes, and what they do not eat are dry. The vine-dresser of Madame du Tremblay has been here to give me his opinion. 'My barrels are not hooped,' says he; 'put off the vintage.' 'Hoop your barrels,' said I. 'Your grapes are not ripe,' said he. 'Go and see them,' said I. He went; he saw. 'Gather your grapes as soon as possible,' said he. What orders do you give, madame, to neighbor V.?"

¹ Life of Albert Gallatin. By Henry Adams. Page 6. Philadelphia, 1879.

Another note acknowledges a basket of figs sent by Madame Gallatin to Les Délices : —

“Your figs, madame, are a present so much the more pleasing because we can say, as was said by another, ‘*For the time of figs was not yet.*’ We have none at Les Délices; but we shall have a theatre at Tournay, and we start in an hour to come to see you. Receive, madame, for yourself and all your family, the tender respects of V.”

Another present of figs he acknowledges thus : —

“You give me more figs, madame, than there are in the land of *papimanie*;¹ and as to myself, madame, I am like the fig-tree of the Gospel, dry and accursed. It is not as an actor, it is as a friend very much attached to all your family, that I am warmly interested in the health of Madame Gallatin-Rolaz. We rehearse on Tuesday in pontifical robes. Those who have tickets will come if they wish. I am yours, madame, for life. V.”

The following needs no explanation : —

“We relied upon all returning to supper at Ferney after the play. The Duke de Villars retained us; our carriage broke down; we experienced all the possible mishaps. Life is sown with them; but the greatest of all is not to have had the honor of supping with you.”

This was written in 1761. After an interval of seven years, we have the following to Madame Gallatin : —

“August 10, 1768. At Ferney. You are blest of God, madame. Six years ago I planted fig-trees, and not one succeeds. This would really be a reason for blasting my fig-trees. But if I had miracles to perform, they would not be of that kind. I limit myself to thanking you, madame. I believe it is only the old fig-trees that bear. Old age is still good for something. I have, like you, some horses thirty years old; that is the reason why I love them. There is nothing like them, except old friends. Young ones, however, are not to be despised, ladies. V.”

In other letters we see him interesting himself in the promotion of a young Gallatin, officer in the Swiss Guards of the King of France. He gave the young man a letter to D’Argen-

¹ Pope mania, — that is, France. Madame Gallatin’s house was not on French soil.

tal, describing him as sprung from "the most ancient family in Switzerland, who have had themselves killed for us, from father to son, since Henry IV.'s time." The Landgrave of Hesse, he who sent his "Hessians" to America in 1776, was a friend of Madame Gallatin, and gave her his portrait. Voltaire composed for her the verses which she sent in acknowledgment. The landgrave sent the lord of Ferney a present of asparagus seed, through Madame Gallatin, — a seed that bears no fruit until the third year. "Your most serene highness," wrote Voltaire, "accords me a very signal benefit, rarely to be expected from princes, nor even from doctors. You have given me a *brevet* for three years of life."

These glimpses of the neighborhood life of Voltaire serve to show us the terms on which he lived with that "third" of the educated families of Geneva who followed not Calvin. Distinguished members of the orthodox party were also among his friends, and were visitors at his house, until "party lines" were drawn to rigidity by later events. There were "rigorists" among the Genevans then, as there are now, there and everywhere; but there was also the class of "the relaxed" (*les relâchés*), who followed Calvin afar off, and would willingly have been regarded as not belonging to the procession. It was they who came in headlong crowds to fill up the theatre at Tourney, hours before the time for the rising of the curtain, but not the less, on Sunday morning, repaired to the Calvinistic temple.

The reader must bear in mind, too, that the master of Ferney was the richest individual and the largest employer of labor in "the land of Gex," the tract of country, twenty-one miles long and nine wide, between the Jura mountains and the Genevan lake, then including twenty-eight parishes and twelve thousand people, — Swiss, French, Savoyards. He was certainly a troublesome neighbor to whomsoever wished to oppress or prey upon these ingenious and amiable people. There is a third of a volume of carefully executed writings on their behalf in his works. At one time we see him appealing to a secular court against the violence of a curé toward a parishioner; now he petitions his government to alter a vexatious discriminating duty upon salt; later, he informs the ministry that his neighbors are subjected to eleven differ-

ent taxes, — land-tax, poll-tax, tithe, twentieth, seigneurie, import duties, tobacco-tax, salt-tax, special salt-tax, leather-tax, and road-tax payable in labor. His various writings on behalf of his poor neighbors and tenants, from 1761 to 1777, — thirty-two pieces in all, — reveal much to us of the condition of the industrious and frugal people of France before the revolution.¹ The most hasty reader cannot fail to notice the force and limpid clearness of these compositions on behalf of the peasant, the laborer, and the serf. Nor did it lessen his zeal for the serfs of Burgundy to know that “twenty thousand fathers of families” in that province were held in bondage by convents and abbeys.

He had one of the qualities which we observe in all the natural masters of men, the legitimate aristocrats: a sense of the folly, as well as the cruelty, of killing, maiming, disheartening, or in any other way lessening the productive power of the goose that lays the golden egg. “Who ought to be the king’s favorite?” he asked. His reply was, “The people.” Through his conviction of this truth he was about to become himself a kind of king, a refuge and an industrial chief to some of the oppressed people both of Geneva and of Gex. “I have had the insolence to build a city,” he often says in his later letters; meaning that, during his residence in the land of Gex, he had converted Ferney from a village of forty-nine hopeless peasants into a thriving factory town of twelve hundred inhabitants, watchmakers, clockmakers, jewelers, and silk weavers, whose products shone in distant courts, and reached many countries beyond the sea. The history of this achievement is one of the most curious episodes of his life.

It began with the judicial burning at Geneva of Rousseau’s “Emile” in 1763, an event which not only excited the warmest controversy in the little republic, but caused great numbers of the people to devour the eloquent half-truths of that morbid, ignorant, histrionic genius. The first sentence of his “Contrat Social” is an excellent example of his method: “Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains.” It is a pair of lies. Man is nowhere born free, and everywhere enjoys a measure of freedom. But the leash of glittering falsehoods made poor men reflect upon their lot, and they found it

¹ See 39 Œuvres de Voltaire, 304 to 449, 97-volume edition.

needlessly hard. He told them also that every citizen, being a unit of the population, an atom of the body politic, ought to be also a fraction, if infinitesimal, of the sovereignty. He enveloped such ideas in melodious, deceptive words, wholly unrestrained by knowledge of the past or observation of the present, wholly unacquainted with facts, life, history, science, business, men; a wonderful histrionic artist, enacting the philanthropist and the philosopher, with sheets of paper for a stage, and, finally, "bringing down the house." Mr. Morley, who has studied this unhappy man deeply and wisely, well says that Rousseau's philosophy is like Hamlet's book, "words, words, words." His system being words, and himself a master of words, he deluded and captivated myriads of amiable men, whose education was chiefly through words.¹

The first community to be disturbed by the teachings of Rousseau was his native Geneva, a community which three centuries of Calvinistic sermons had rendered susceptible to the influence of words. In Geneva, as everywhere on the Continent, the industrious poor man was excluded from participation in the sovereignty. Geneva was less a "republic" than ancient Athens, since the most numerous class of the citizens had no voice in the government, not so much as the casting of an oyster shell. There was the Great Council of Two Hundred, and the Little Council, or Senate, of Twenty-Five; there was, also, the Consistory of the Clergy, which held regular meetings, and had much power over education and morals. These bodies were independent of the people, and resented, as insufferable "insolence," the claim of the people to some influence over their decisions.

In 1763, the inhabitants of the republic were of three classes: (1) the governing class, consisting of the two councils, the clergy, their families and dependents; (2) the shopkeepers, manufacturers, and master mechanics, that is, the *bourgeois*,

¹ "Rousseau's method," says Mr. Morley, "charmed their *temperament*. A man who handles sets of complex facts is necessarily slow-footed, but one who has only words to deal with may advance with a speed, a precision, a consistency, a conclusiveness, that has a magical potency over men who insist on having politics and theology drawn out in exact theorems, like those of geometry. Rousseau traces his conclusions from words, and develops his system from the interior germs of phrases." (Rousseau. By John Morley. Vol. ii. page 135. London, 1873.)

who demanded a share of political power; (3) the journeymen mechanics and the employed class generally, who, besides not having any political rights, could not set up in business for themselves, nor fill the lowest office, nor exercise either of the liberal professions. These "Helots" of the republic, the most numerous class in the city, were called Natives, because they were somewhat less native to the place than the other inhabitants. A Native was the son, grandson, or great-grandson of foreigners who had settled in Geneva; he was not of the original stock; his ancestors had not smelt the fire that burned Servetus.

This class, which included many of the most exquisite mechanics in Europe, the products of whose skill and fidelity nobles were proud to wear and kings to bestow, demanded the rights of *bourgeois*; and the *bourgeois*, while pressing for some small share of political power for themselves, rejected the modest demand of the Natives with scorn. All this was latent in Geneva, until Rousseau's maddening rhetoric ran over Europe like prairie fire, thin, sparkling, easily extinguishable, but capable of setting in a blaze any dry accumulation that lay in its path, whether heap of ancient rubbish, or well-stored barn of honest pioneer.

The burning of "Emile," in 1763, with the Savoyard Vicar in its bosom, roused the dormant passions of the three classes in Geneva. Voltaire used all his influence and all his art to prevent the burning, and he exulted at the warmth of the popular protest against it. In August, 1763, he rejoiced at the spectacle of two hundred of the *bourgeois* marching to the Hôtel de Ville to convey this protest. A few days after, August 21, 1763, he writes to Damiaville, "It is good my brothers should know that yesterday six hundred persons went, for the third time, to protest in favor of Jean-Jacques against the Council of Geneva, who had dared to condemn the Savoyard Vicar." A considerable number of pastors, who had the discernment to see that Rousseau, upon the whole, favored their claim and cause, joined in these demonstrations.

In the heat of this contest over "Emile," Voltaire forgot all his antipathy to Rousseau. When the author of the Savoyard Vicar was obliged to fly from Paris, he again offered him a refuge. "M. de Voltaire," Wagnière records, "charged me to write to him and offer him, on his part, a little house and do-

main, called the Hermitage, which he possessed, near Ferney. I made seven copies of my letter, and addressed them to different places, not knowing where M. Rousseau had gone."

This conduct was the more noticeable from the previous relations between the two authors, which were far from amicable. We have seen Rousseau siding against Voltaire in his contest with the Calvinists on the drama. In June, 1760, he wrote a letter to Voltaire, of great length and heat, denying that it was any fault of his that their correspondence on that subject had been published, and charging upon Voltaire the supposed alienation of his countrymen from himself.

"I do not love you, sir," he said in this mad epistle; "you have brought upon me the very ills which could pain me most, — upon *me*, your disciple and your enthusiast. You have ruined Geneva, in return for the asylum you have received there; you have alienated from me my fellow-citizens, in recompense of the applause which I have lavished upon you among them. It is you who have rendered a residence in my country insupportable to me; it is you who will cause me to die in a foreign land, deprived of all the consolations of the dying, and to be thrown into the kennel as my only funeral rite, while all the honor which a man can hope for will accompany you in my country. I hate you, in fact, since you have wished it so; but I hate you as a man who is worthier far to love you, if you had so chosen. Of all the sentiments with which my heart was once penetrated for you, there remains only the admiration which cannot be refused to your beautiful genius, and my love for your writings."

Voltaire made no reply. His comment upon this letter, a few days after, was only too correct. "I have received," he tells Thieriot, June 13, 1760, "a long letter from Jean-Jacques Rousseau. He has become quite foolish [*fou*]: it is a pity." Some time after (February, 1761), to Madame d'Épinal: "As for Jean-Jacques, he is only a poor creature, who has abandoned his friends, and deserves to be abandoned by every one. He has nothing in his heart except the vanity to show himself amid the fragments of Diogenes' tub, and collect a mob about him that he may display his pride and his rags. It is a pity; for he was born with some half-talents, and he would perhaps have had a whole talent if he had been docile and

honest." Elsewhere he sweetly remarks that the dog of Eros-tratus, who fired the Ephesian dome, met one day the female dog of Diogenes, and thus started the noble line from which Jean-Jacques descended. He found opportunity, also, to insert in one of his numerous prefaces a prophecy concerning Rousseau, which ran over Europe, and was published in English periodicals of 1761:—

"In those days there will appear in France a very extraordinary person, come from the banks of a lake. He will say unto the people, All the men are virtuous in the country where I was born, and I will not stay in the country where I was born; and he will maintain that the sciences and the arts must necessarily corrupt our morals, and he will treat of all sorts of sciences and arts; and he will maintain that the theatre is a source of prostitution and corruption, and he will compose operas and plays. He will publish that there is no virtue but among the savages, though he never was among them; he will advise mankind to go stark naked, and he will wear laced cloths when given him. He will employ his time in copying French music, and he will tell you there is no French music. He will tell you that it is impossible to preserve your morals if you read romances; and he will compose a romance, and in this romance shall be seen vice in deeds and virtue in words, and the actors in it shall be mad with love and with philosophy."

A ludicrous burlesque of the "Nouvelle Héloïse" follows this introduction. But in 1762 Rousseau was a fugitive from Paris, and liable to prosecution in Geneva. Then, besides opposing with all his force the burning of "Emile," Voltaire offered the author a house near his own. At that time Rousseau, though but little past fifty, had nearly expended his sanity, and he returned, as Wagnière tells us, a churlish, abusive answer. "What a pity this man has lost his head!" said Voltaire, on reading it. Rousseau was then living in the dominions of the King of Prussia, an object of peculiar and universal curiosity, difficult for us to realize. Voltaire soon after learned that one of his workmen had lately come from Neuchâtel, near which Rousseau's retreat was supposed to be. It seems that the master of Ferney sought an interview with this stranger, and had with him a conversation, which the man reported to a friend of Rousseau, who wrote it out in a letter to Madame de Boufflers, in October, 1762:—

VOLTAIRE. — "You have in your country a certain personage of this, who has not managed his affairs very well."

WORKMAN. — "Who, then?"

VOLTAIRE. — "A certain Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Do you know him?"

WORKMAN. — "Yes, sir; I saw him one day at Butte in the carriage of M. de Montmollin, who rode with him."

VOLTAIRE. — "What! That scrub [*piéd-plat*] in a carriage! He must be very proud, then?"

WORKMAN. — "Oh, sir, he goes also on foot. He runs like a lean cat, and climbs all our mountains."

VOLTAIRE. — "He may climb some day up a ladder. He would have been hanged at Paris if he had not run away; and he will be hanged if he comes here."

WORKMAN. — "Hanged, sir! He has the air of being so good a man! Eh, *mon Dieu*, what has he done, then?"

VOLTAIRE. — "He writes abominable books. He is an impious man, an atheist."

WORKMAN. — "You surprise me. He goes to church every Sunday."

VOLTAIRE. — "Ah, the hypocrite! And what do they say of him in that country? Will any one visit him?"

WORKMAN. — "Everybody, sir; everybody loves him. He is invited everywhere; and they say that my lord [the governor of Neuchâtel] pays him also many attentions."

VOLTAIRE. — "It is because my lord does not know him, nor you any more. Just wait two or three months, and you will know the man. The servants at Montmorency, where he lived, set off fire-works when he ran away to escape hanging. He is a man without faith, without honor, without religion."

WORKMAN. — "Without religion, sir! But they say that you have not much yourself."

VOLTAIRE. — "Who? I? *Grand Dieu!* And who is it that says that?"

WORKMAN. — "Everybody, sir."

VOLTAIRE. — "Oh! what a horrible calumny! I, who studied with the Jesuits! I, who have spoken of God better than all the theologians!"

WORKMAN. — "But, sir, people say that you have made many bad books."

VOLTAIRE. — "They lie. Let them show me a single one which bears my name, as those of this fellow [*croquant*] bear his."

This conversation, Rousseau wrote down from memory, after his informant had retained it two or three months. Doubtless the report is incorrect, though there are in it some Voltairian touches. Rousseau had seen his best days. David Hume, one of the best tempered men of his generation, procured him soon after an asylum and royal pension in England; but Rousseau quarreled with him also, and returned to perish miserably in France.

Meanwhile, his writings were having their natural effect in making the watchmakers of Geneva acutely conscious of their unhappiness, and more restive under the domination of the ruling class. Voltaire was already involved, in some degree, with them. He had been, from the beginning of his residence near Geneva, in almost continuous warfare against whatever was narrow and provincial in the laws and usages of the genuine sons of Calvin. He had forced the drama upon them, as we have seen. Whenever there had been a dispute or contention between the rigorists and the *relachés*, Voltaire had usually contrived in some way to come to the rescue of his natural allies. Thus, for example, in January, 1763, a few months before the burning of "Emile," there was an affair in which the rigorists were ludicrously discomfited through his assistance. Voltaire himself relates it in a letter to the D'Argentals: —

"See, my angels, if this will amuse you, and if it will amuse the Duke of Praslin. The men-servants of the French and English, or, rather, the French and English who are in Geneva, desired to give a ball to the maid-servants, in honor of the conclusion of peace. Their masters lavished money upon the preparations. Splendid dresses were made; the arms of England and France were blended; rockets, sweetmeats were prepared; fat chickens and fiddlers were gathered from twenty leagues around; ribbons, shoulder-knots, were made ready; and *Long Live the Dukes of Praslin and Bedford* [the negotiators] was to blaze out in a fine display of fire-works. The Square-Wigs of Geneva found that bad. They said that Calvin had expressly forbidden balls; that they knew the Scriptures better than the Duke of Praslin; that, besides, they had sold their contraband merchandise dearer during the war. In one word, after all the expense of the *fête* had been incurred, they prohibited it. Then the joyous band took a very wise course. You think, perhaps, they set fire to the city of Geneva. Not at all. They went and celebrated their orgies upon the territory of

France (they had not very far to go). Nothing was ever more gay, more splendid, or more pleasant. This, perhaps, will not appear so agreeable to you as it was to us; but we are serious people, whom the least things amuse."

Before this event had ceased to be a topic of conversation, he took sides against the rigorists in a notorious case, which he so managed as to bring upon them the laughter of Europe, and which remains to this day a diverting tale. A citizen of Geneva, Robert Covelle by name, a commonplace man of licentious character, was brought before the consistory to receive its solemn censure for an offense against morals. He confessed his fault; after which the president of the consistory ordered him to kneel, according to ancient custom, to receive a reprimand and to ask pardon. Robert Covelle would not bend the knee. He told the clergy that he needed a week for reflection to decide whether he could submit to the humiliating formality. When fifteen days had passed, he presented himself again before them, when he refused to humble himself in the manner required. He also offered a paper, in which he proved that the ecclesiastical laws did not prescribe the kneeling.

This document was a notable piece of composition; and, as Covelle was obviously deficient in the mental power requisite for such an argument, he was pressed to divulge the author. He owned, at length, that he had been taken to Ferney, and that Voltaire had induced him to promise to defy the consistory. Two or three citizens of Geneva, he stated, had been present on the occasion, had encouraged him to the defiance, and had procured for Voltaire the information necessary for the compilation of the document which he had just presented to the consistory. Robert Covelle was full of confidence. "I am now," he said to the chairman, "perfectly decided. Not only will I not submit to these gentlemen, but I am going to have this document against kneeling printed."

He was as good as his word, and the pamphlet had universal currency. Parties were inflamed. The clergy could only reply that a usage which had been practiced for centuries, and to which so many distinguished men had submitted, was more than equivalent to a mere paragraph of an ordinance. If the letter of the law did not prescribe kneeling, it was sufficiently sanctioned by use and propriety. The party of Vol-

taire maintained, on the other hand, that, even if the bending of the knee before a human court had been required by the written law, times had changed, and customs ought to change with them. A citizen of Geneva, they said, ought not to be subjected to a usage so painful; repentance being an affair between the individual conscience and the Sovereign Judge. The man who thinks that he has violated the divine law ought to humble himself, ought to kneel before his God; but, in accordance with the very words of Jesus Christ, this act should be performed in the profoundest secrecy, without witnesses, as no one is able to intervene between the creature who repents and the Creator who pardons.

The worthy pastor Gaberel, who reports this line of argument with undisguised approval, proceeds to say that the consistory would not yield the point to the demand of the people. Pamphlet upon pamphlet, he says, appeared; a collection of which fills three large volumes, still accessible in Geneva. Voltaire defended his client with all the weapons of his armory, satire, and argument, prose and verse. He wrote twelve public letters in the name of Robert Covelle; he allowed him a small pension; and, finally, he made him a leading character in his burlesque poem "The War of Geneva," a work which exhibits all the license of "La Pucelle," but not all its grace, variety, and comic force. This burlesque appeared one canto at a time, and pervaded the republic, no one knew how, until the whole poem was published in 1768, and overwhelmed with ridicule the consistory and the magnificent council, Jean-Jacques, the Calvinistic rigorists, and the whole conservative party. A few months after, the council took the matter out of the hands of the consistory by formally abolishing the usage of kneeling to receive clerical reprimand.

Thus, once more, after six years of effort, Voltaire triumphed. Covelle had been arraigned before the clergy February 23, 1763, and the decree abolishing the usage bears date February 9, 1769. He was not yet quite satisfied.

Covelle next claimed his right to be readmitted to the communion. The consistory replied that it was most willing to accept a true repentance, but that to prove his sincerity he must disavow publicly the twelve letters written in his name by Voltaire, and, above all, renounce the annual subvention of

three hundred francs which Voltaire allowed him for the privilege of printing in his name things impious and scandalous. Covelle denied the subvention; but, according to Gaberel, who had access to the records, the fact was proved against him. As he persisted in his denial, the consistory decided to have nothing more to do with him.¹

At the height of this contest, the consistory had an opportunity to deal Voltaire a disagreeable blow in return. It was the Empress Catherine II. of Russia who gave them the opportunity,—a sovereign held in aversion by them and their allies. “The government of Geneva,” M. Gaberel amusingly remarks, “was little disposed to favor the aggrandizement of a power already colossal,” and Voltaire was much annoyed that, when the armies of Catherine were beaten by the Turks, two or three councilors illuminated their grounds. He hastened to complain of it to Prince Gallitzine, Russian ambassador at Paris. Soon, however, he had a more serious subject of complaint. The Empress sent to Geneva a certain M. de Bulow, to whom she gave a letter of introduction to Voltaire, and charged him to conduct to St. Petersburg a certain number of governesses and trained domestics, destined to the service of the imperial court. In the register of the council of August 20, 1765, we read:—

“M. Sales, syndic of the guard, having information that the Sieur de Bulow, colonel in the service of her majesty the Empress Catherine, has arrived in this city with a commission to engage some *demoiselles* for service in Russia, the syndic has been careful to observe his conduct. That officer has attempted to unsettle some persons; upon which the opinion of the council was that such engagements are opposed to our laws, which do not permit journeys of that kind, and they beg the Sieur de Bulow to desist voluntarily from his efforts, in order to save himself further trouble.”

M. de Bulow took a lofty tone, and declared that he would not leave Geneva before he had fulfilled his mission, unless he was arrested by soldiers. His resistance was useless. Berne and Geneva united to prevent the emigration, and the envoy of Catherine had to leave without taking a single person with him. The council intrenched itself behind the law, which, however,

¹ Voltaire et les Genevois, par J. Gaberel, page 51. Paris, 1857.

did not prevent Genevan girls from accepting places as governesses in England.

Gabrel adds, "*There was another motive*, as Voltaire well knew. Angry at this *insolence*, as he termed it, he questioned M. Tronchin, who stood upon no ceremony in saying to the adorer of Catherine these significant words: 'M. de Voltaire, the council regards itself as the father of all the citizens; hence, it cannot suffer that its children should go to establish themselves at a court the sovereign of which is strongly suspected of having permitted her husband to be assassinated, and where the loosest morals prevail unchecked.'"

It appears from a letter to D'Argental that Voltaire contrived to send some girls to Russia, notwithstanding. "The Empress of all the Russias, sovereign of two thousand leagues of country and of three hundred thousand armed automatons who have beaten the Prussians, deigned to invite some women of Geneva to go and teach some young girls of Petersburg how to read and sew. The council of Geneva was imbecile and tyrannical enough to prevent its free citizens from going where they please, and insolent enough to expel from the city a lord sent by that sovereign! The Count de Schouvalof, who was at my house at the time, recommended those girls to me. Assuredly, I do not hesitate between Catherine II. and the Twenty-Five Bigwigs of Geneva. This affair has been very disagreeable to me. There are in that council three or four rascals [*coquins*], or, in other words, three or four fanatic devotees, who are good for nothing but to throw into the lake."

But, as usual, those three or four fanatic devotees had behind them a mass of the timid, prejudiced, rich, and old members, who are often useful as ballast and brake, though they render their vehicle extremely slow in moving onward. He was warmly supported in all these affairs by the liberal party of Genevans, themselves in ever-growing feud with the *coquins*, who "were only fit to be thrown into the lake," and who were about to put in peril both the prosperity and the independence of Geneva.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

HIS COLONY OF WEAVERS AND WATCHMAKERS.

VOLTAIRE began his direct interference in the politics of the little republic, in 1765, by an honest attempt to compose its party differences, which were becoming, as he thought, extreme and irrational.

The councilors, the bourgeois, and the natives, were all in the worst possible temper. Powerful neighbors, France, Germany, and remoter Prussia, looked languidly or laughingly upon what seemed a mere tempest in a teapot, little thinking that they were viewing the rehearsal of a tragedy soon to be presented on the great theatres of the world, and to be repeated many times. The first contention in which he took part was between the bourgeois and the councils. The bourgeois, grown rich in manufactures and trade, demanded a share of more direct political power: a voice in the selection of candidates for the councils, and an influence in their deliberations something more than a barren right of petition. The councilors repelled these demands with the usual haughtiness of a privileged order. The result was that both parties were in such violent irritation that reason lost its sway over passion, and all Geneva was in a kind of fury. This was toward the end of 1765, soon after the affair of the governesses, and even while Voltaire was still complaining to D'Argental of the conduct of the Twenty-Five in that matter. In writing to his angels, October 26, 1765, he said: —

“ You believe, then, that I am wrong in taking part against the retention of the girls. I conceive well that it is not permitted to enroll soldiers or allure manufacturers; but I assure you that women who are of age have the legal right to travel, and that the manner in which the council treated a lord sent by Catherine is directly contrary to divine, human, and even Genevan laws. I was the more annoyed by it because the

Count of Schouvalof, who was very much interested in that affair, was then at my house. I assure you, moreover, that I have never associated with the members of the council of the minute republic of Geneva; for, except the Tronchins and two or three others, that tripod is composed of pedants of the sixteenth century. There is much more *esprit* and reason in the other citizens."

In writing upon the same subject, a day or two after, to the Russian ambassador at Paris, he said that party spirit had rendered some of the magistrates ridiculously hostile to France and to Russia. We observe that he excepts "the Tronchins and a few others." At this crisis a German author, who wrote on the part of the bourgeois, dedicated to him an ode, — "a very bad ode," he calls it; but it was followed by an intelligible history of the political contentions of Geneva. It was evident that the liberal party looked to him for aid as to a natural ally and champion of the oppressed. He at once determined to attempt the part of mediator between the embittered factions, and wrote a long letter to Councilor Tronchin, proposing that the heads of the two parties should dine together at his house, and endeavor to discuss their differences in a friendly manner. He had already given conciliatory repasts at Ferney, with some apparent benefit.

"I see with grief [he wrote to the councilor] the jealousies, the divisions, the uneasiness, in Geneva, increasing. Not that I fear those little emotions will lead to confusion and tumult; but it is sad to see a city filled with virtuous and well-informed men, who have all that is necessary for happiness, and yet not enjoying their prosperity. I am very far from believing that I can be useful; but I trust (perhaps I deceive myself) that it is not impossible to reconcile in some degree the discordant minds. Some citizens have come to my house, who seemed to unite moderation with clearness of view. In the present circumstances, I do not see that it would be malapropos if two or three of your most conciliatory magistrates should do me the honor to dine at Ferney, and that they should find it good that two of the wisest citizens should meet them on the occasion. I could, also, if you think it best, invite an advocate in whom both parties have confidence. Even though this interview should serve only to soften embittered feelings, and cause the parties to desire a necessary agreement, it would be much, and nothing but good could result from it. It does not belong to me to be the conciliator; I presume merely to take the liberty of

offering a repast, at which the guests might be able to come to an understanding. This dinner would not have the appearance of being premeditated; no one would be compromised; and I should have the advantage of proving my affectionate and respectful sentiments for you, monsieur, for all your family, and for the magistrates who honor me with their benevolence."

This letter being submitted to the Twenty-Five, they treated it as became "pedants of the sixteenth century." They ordered M. de Voltaire to be informed, by the civilest possible letter, that the council was not disposed to discuss the matter in any way. They had made up their minds: the subject was closed. Before the lord of Ferney had received this communication, a message was conveyed to him that four citizens (bourgeois) of Geneva desired to consult him upon the crisis. He sent a carriage for them; they dined with him. They showed such a moderate and reasonable spirit that he wrote again to the council, through their secretary, saying that he had good hopes of a conciliation. He imagined he saw in them an equal regard for the rights of the people and the just authority of the council. The council still declined to negotiate; but the bourgeois continued to frequent his house, where they met sometimes the intelligent members of the two councils. They requested him to draw up a basis of agreement, which he did, and submitted the draught to his Paris lawyers. All was in vain. The council, rather than yield so far as to discuss the claims of the bourgeois, appealed to France, and asked its mediation in this purely domestic difference. The French ministry appointed a commissioner, M. Hennin, to hear the parties and mediate between them.

The master of Ferney was relieved by this turn of affairs. "My angels," he wrote, December 2, 1765, "I assure you again that I am tired of losing my time in the attempt to reconcile the Genevans. I have given long dinners to the two parties. . . . M. Hennin will perhaps find the suit finished, or will easily terminate it. My only part, as I have already said, has been to throw a little water upon the embers of Jean-Jacques Rousseau." There was need of a cooling influence, but it was not likely to come from the French government. The appeal to France appears to have inflamed the passions of the bourgeois to a degree that was not always controllable.

One of them, who had been drinking, met in the street one of Dr. Tronchin's French patients, president of a parliament, and gave him a tremendous box on the ear; as if in him he saw detested France incarnate. The mediation, in fact, did not prosper; the ill-feeling continued, increased, and issued, in 1770, in tumult and blood.

Voltaire, then, failed to reconcile the bourgeois with the aristocracy. He was next drawn into the equally hot dissension between the bourgeois and the natives; for the bourgeois were as resolute to keep the natives down as the councilors were to exclude the bourgeois. It was an illustration of the truth, now so familiar, that the oppressed naturally become oppressors.

In March, 1766, two natives came to Ferney to consult the defender of Calas and Sirven, and to ask his aid for their class. He received them politely. "Bring me," said he, "a detailed statement of your wrongs, and I will serve you with all the influence I have." They departed well pleased, called a secret meeting of their order, held many meetings in various places, attempted to agree upon a statement, but found literature a thorny path. Meanwhile, the syndics had heard of this audacious movement. They summoned one of Voltaire's visitors before them, and treated him with gross indignity. At length, the natives agreed upon a statement, and a delegation of three of their number conveyed it to Ferney: Auzière, watchcase-maker, Sylvestre, bookkeeper, and Pouzait, upholsterer. Voltaire received them and their Mémoire with every mark of consideration, read the paper with care, questioned them at much length, expressed a warm sympathy with their object, and dismissed them with words like these:—

"My friends, you constitute the most numerous class of an independent, industrious community, and you are in slavery. You ask only to be able to enjoy your natural advantages. It is just that you should be accorded a request so moderate. I shall serve you with all the influence I have over the plenipotentary lords, and if you are forced to leave a country which prospers through your labor *I shall be able to serve and protect you elsewhere.*"¹

¹ 3 Mémoires Historiques et Politiques, par Isaac Cornaud, 45. Quoted in Voltaire et Genève, par Gustave Desnoiresterres, page 34.

Voltaire alluded to the "plenipotentiary lords" in this address. The first attempt on the part of France to mediate having failed, three new mediators were appointed, one by France, one by Berne, one by Zurich; all of whom were then in Geneva on the business of the mediation. Chief among them was the French commissioner, M. de Beauteville, who assumed all the importance of a plenipotentiary, lived at the "Hôtel de France," and had his secretary of legation and *attachés*. To these three "plenipotentiary lords" all Geneva was anxiously looking for a solution of distracting problems; and, meanwhile, each of the orders of the state, every public body, the clergy, the councils, the judges, were paying them visits of ceremony and presenting to them formal addresses. With Voltaire the whole of the French legation had become immediately intimate, and some of the diplomatic family were almost daily at his house. He spoke to the mediators on behalf of the natives, a body unknown to diplomacy. It then occurred to him that the natives, too, might very properly pay a ceremonial visit to the mediators, and present a written "compliment," as the councils, the consistory, the bourgeois, and other bodies had done. Elegant composition, he knew, was not their strong point, and he accordingly wrote their address for them:—

"VERY ILLUSTRIOUS AND VERY EXCELLENT LORDS.—
The natives are tardy in taking the liberty to present their profound respects to your Excellencies. Deign to attribute to timidity alone our delay in presenting to you so just a mark of homage. Your affability, your indulgence, have given us the requisite courage. We flatter ourselves that your Excellencies will deign to cast upon us the benevolent regards with which you have favored all the orders of the state. We are the last to offer you our good wishes, but we were not the last to form them, and to thank Heaven for remitting to your hands the interests of our country."

Voltaire was well pleased with this effusion. He called it *fin, fin*. We can with difficulty realize the sly humor of it, because we cannot conceive how far the Genevans then were from regarding the natives as an "order of the state." "What is the third estate?" the Abbé Sieyès was soon to ask. In the republic of Geneva, in 1766, it was "nothing;"

and it was for this reason that Voltaire viewed with complacency so slight an effort of his pen. He enjoyed the anticipation of its effect upon those *coquins* of the Twenty-Five, those pedants of the sixteenth century.

On Sunday morning, April 20, 1766, at half past eleven, a deputation of four natives arrived at the French embassy, where, after some delays, they were received by the secretary of the legation. While the secretary was placing and preparing them for the audience, the mediator, M. de Beauteville, hearing the noise, burst into the room, his toilette incomplete, his spectacles on his nose. "Who is it that asks to see me?" he said, in the blunt manner of the old soldier. "It is messieurs the natives," replied the secretary, "who desire to present a compliment to monseigneur." "Where is it?" asked the mediator, holding out his hand. The spokesman, alas, had left the compliment at home, and stood speechless. After some time, he found his tongue, enlarged upon the unjust disabilities under which the natives suffered, and bestowed all his tediousness upon the mediator. M. de Beauteville replied that it was no part of his mission to rectify their wrongs; nor were they an order of the state, though belonging to it. The head of the delegation opened his eyes wide at this reply, and was launching into impetuous, ill-timed remonstrance, when the secretary contrived to parry him, and bring the audience to a polite and vague conclusion.

The four natives were much abashed by the morning's adventures, and looked forward with some apprehension to the comments of Voltaire. Happily, one of them conceived the idea of sending to Ferney a comic narrative of their interview with the French mediator; and the writer was so well pleased with his effort that he mounted horse on the same Sunday afternoon, and carried it himself to the château. The master, being engaged, wrote hastily upon a card, which Wagnière brought out to him: "Keep quiet. You shall hear from me to-morrow." And, in truth, on the day following, Auzière was summoned to Ferney, where Voltaire made him relate again the story of the Sunday's exploits. He complimented the natives upon their dexterity in introducing themselves to the nobility, and, after some further mockery, took a serious tone:—

"After all," said he, "the compliment was only a begin-

ning; but it is necessary to strike while the iron is hot. Here is a petition, which I have composed this night, in the name of the natives. Take it; go, and get together, if you can, all the natives; read it to them: and, above all, do not name me. Only, affect to say, with a mysterious air, that it comes from the hand of a powerful protector, who will be of more value to you than all the mediating lords put together. I know the people; these grand words impose upon them."

By four o'clock on the following day, fifteen hundred natives were at their usual place of meeting, three times as many as the room would hold; so that it was necessary to divide them into three companies, and read the petition to each in turn. Auzière began the reading with the word *messeigneurs*, a title which Voltaire gave to the mediators, according to the etiquette established. At once there rose a cry: "Not messeigneurs! not messeigneurs!" Other objections were made. The tone seemed too submissive, and the reader was obliged to promise to change, or cause to be changed, the several offensive expressions. The chiefs returned anxiously to Ferney, and reported to Voltaire the discontent of the natives with the petition he had written for them. So far from being displeased, he applauded the dignified sentiments of the artisans, and made all the changes desired by them with the utmost alacrity. Thus amended, the petition was sent to the mediators, but not until Voltaire had given the native leaders distinct warning that all their efforts would probably be fruitless. He foresaw but too clearly that if the mediators were disposed to advocate seriously their claims, the Genevan bourgeois and councils would unite against them.

"My friends," he said, and his words were remembered in Geneva for many years,—"my friends, you are not unlike those little flying-fish, which, out of the water, are eaten by birds of prey, or else, when they plunge again into the water, are devoured by the larger fish. You are between two parties equally powerful: you will be sacrificed to the interests of one or the other, or perhaps of both united."

So it proved. The petition was duly sent to the embassy, and even printed, together with the compliment previously forwarded. The four natives were summoned to the Hôtel de France, where their reception was by no means gracious

or assuring. M. de Beauteville being confined to his bed, the deputation was received by the secretary of legation, who by turns questioned and bullied them. "Who composed," he asked, in the severest tone, "the two pieces which you have sent me, and particularly the compliment?" One of the delegation entreated his Excellency to excuse any mistakes he may have found in the pieces, since they were written by simple workmen, very inapt in composition. The secretary thundered in reply, "It is not for want of *esprit* that I doubt this compliment to be of your composition. On the contrary, it is because I find too much in it that I am persuaded some one else lent you his pen." The delegation, we are told, stood silent and embarrassed, until the secretary said, in his most menacing manner, "Do you know that I shall make you rot in a dungeon if you have the audacity to conceal from me the truth?" One of them then confessed that Voltaire was the author of both documents, and the secretary dismissed them.

Their case was indeed hopeless. A few days after, a horseman came galloping to Ferney with the news that Auzière had been arrested and was in prison. The claim of the natives was evidently regarded by the ruling classes as too preposterous for serious consideration. Auzière was soon released. The lord of Ferney continued to receive and advise the natives from time to time, but assured them always that so long as they remained within the territory of Geneva he could do nothing effectual for them. He invariably ended his interviews by saying, "If the hardness of your masters compels you to abandon your native country, *then come to me.*"

According to his own account, his efforts to conciliate the parties had the usual effect of satisfying neither.

"As to the comedy of Geneva," he wrote to D'Argental, "it is a cold, complicated piece, which begins to bore me severely. For some time past I have been serving as consulting advocate. I have always advised the Genevans to be more gay than they are, to establish the theatre among them, and to learn how to be happy with the four millions of revenue which they draw from France. The spirit of contumacy is in this family."

. . . . "I have then declared to the council, to the bourgeois, and to the natives that, not being a church warden of

their parish, it did not become me to mingle in their affairs, and that I had enough business of my own. I have given them a good example of pacification in arranging my tithes with my parish priest, and finishing, by a stroke of the pen, with the help of a few louis d'or, some troublesome disputes of a hundred years' standing."

One incident of the mediation was highly diverting. We have already seen how Voltaire frustrated the Genevan pedants in the matter of the drama by building a theatre at Clâtelaïne, on French soil, a few yards from the boundary line. That theatre was still amusing the "sombre children of Calvin," in 1766, when the plenipotentiary lords arrived at Geneva. Voltaire saw his opportunity for a more unequivocal triumph over them. He told the story of his theatre to M. de Beauteville. A few days after, the French mediator asked the council of Twenty-Five, as a favor to himself and his colleagues, that the Clâtelaïne company should be allowed to play in Geneva. At first, the council, though it was a party point with them to conciliate the French mediator, dared not give its consent; but still less did they dare refuse. After hesitation, they yielded, and the drama was allowed in the city of Calvin. The exultation of the author of "Zaire" at this triumph breaks out in his letters: "The theatre is in Geneva! In vain has Jean-Jacques played in this affair the part of a crack-brain; the plenipotentiaries have given him the whip publicly. As to the preachers, they dare not raise their heads. When 'Tartuffe' is played, the people seize with transport the allusions which touch them."

His triumph, M. Gaberel thinks, was short, as he was unable to foresee that in the year 1879 there would be opened in Geneva one of the finest theatres in Europe. In February, 1768, when the drama had been established there less than two years, toward six in the evening, as our pastor relates, a cry of fire was heard in Geneva. "Every one," he adds, "ran, pail in hand, according to usage. But when the people, both men and women, saw where the fire was, they poured away their pails of water, saying, 'Ah, it is the theatre that is burning! Very well, my fine gentlemen, let those who want it put it out!'" The building was burned to the ground. When Voltaire heard of the refusal of the people to assist, he said,

“Oh, that Geneva! When you think you have it, it escapes you. Magistrates and people, — they are all alike [*perruques et tignasses, c'est tout un*].”

Happily, the Châtelaine was left, and the company of players returned thither. Fourteen years passed before the theatre was rebuilt in Geneva.

Such events as these did not allay the political irritation. The strife of parties continued in Geneva, and became more and more intense and embittered. The mediation utterly failed. French troops were quartered along the lake, in Gex, in order to reduce the little republic by blockade. Business languished; many of the natives, well-skilled silk-weavers and watchmakers, were idle; provisions grew dearer. For a short time Ferney itself was with difficulty supplied with the necessaries of life, until the Duke of Choiseul sent an order excepting the château from the general rule, because, as he wrote, its master was “infinitely excepted in his heart.” The natives then found out what Voltaire had meant when he kept saying to them, in many forms of language, “When you can no longer bear the insolence of your employers, come to me, and I will protect you elsewhere.” Within a few months of their first consulting him, he began to build houses in the village of Ferney, such as watchmakers and stocking-weavers might occupy to advantage. In May, 1767, he could already write to his angels, “I have founded a colony at Ferney, where I have established tradesmen, artists, and a surgeon, and where I am building houses.”

Tenants presented themselves faster than he could get houses ready for them. To his silk-stocking weavers he lent money, as Wagnière reports, on very easy terms, “four per cent.,” and gave them the full benefit of his knowledge of business, markets, exchange, modes of transport: enabling them to buy their raw materials at the best times, places, and prices, and to send their products where they were most in request. In 1770, when the obstinate pride of these fanatic rigorists, pedants of the sixteenth century, had its natural issue in tumult and blood, great numbers of watchmakers fled from the city, and sought refuge at Ferney. Voltaire opened his arms and his house to them. He gave shelter to as many as he could; he surrendered his theatre to them; he pushed

on the completion of houses, and ordered the building of more. The theatre he fitted up as a watch factory, and "in six weeks," as he says, his fugitives had watches for sale. In all, he built at Ferney about a hundred houses, most of which, Wagnière tells us, were sold to tenants, on condition of their paying a rent of five, six, or seven per cent. of the cost during Voltaire's life, and half as much, after his death, during the life of Madame Denis. He was of great service to his watchmakers in buying gold, silver, and jewels, for their manufacture, on better terms than Genevan makers could compass. For forty years he had been interested in commerce with the countries which supply those commodities; he knew precisely where, when, how, and of whom to buy them.

The tact, the energy, the enthusiasm, with which he promoted this enterprise of "founding a city in the desert" has filled the later volumes of his correspondence with amusing letters. Nothing but the brevity of human life prevented his actually building a city upon the site of his village, and drawing into it the vital currents that had given a century of prosperous growth to Geneva. He knew how to deal with human beings; he had at Ferney no pedants of the sixteenth century to interfere with him; and, as long as the King of France was governed by mistresses, he would always be able to place a few verses of epigrammatic compliment where they would do his watchmakers much good. He thought at one time of naming his city "Choiseul," in honor of the minister to whom he was indebted for many substantial services. Perhaps he abandoned the idea on learning that the mistress and the minister were mortal enemies. Happily, before the mistress had exiled the minister, Ferney had received from both the Duke and Duchess of Choiseul much of the aid which an infant colony needs.

It was the amiable and witty Duchess of Choiseul who wore the first silk stockings woven upon the looms of Ferney; for he was resolved to give his new wares the advantage which he had procured for his opinions, namely, the approval of "good company." The duchess was a little creature. Without telling her why, he asked her for the measure of her foot, and, in reply, she offered to send him a pair of her shoes. "Madame," he replied, "you are unlike ordinary ladies; you

give at once more than you are asked for. I need only one of your shoes, quite enough for an old hermit, and you deign to offer me two. Only one, madame, only one. There is never anything said in the romances except of a shoe; and observe that Anacreon says, 'I would like to be your *shoe*.' Have, then, the goodness, madame, to send me one shoe, and you shall then know why."

The shoe arrived. The lady, unable to guess his object, appears to have sent him a very large shoe, or easy slipper. He wrote, "I have received the shoe with which it has pleased your greatness to gratify me. It is one foot and half an inch long; and, as I have heard that your figure is of the best proportions, it is clear that you must be seven feet three inches and a half high. Add to this stature the two inches and a half of your heel, and we have a lady seven feet six, — a very advantageous height. People may say as much as they please of the Venus de Medicis being little, but Minerva was very large."

He sent the stockings, at length, informing her that his own silk-worms had produced the material of which they were made, and that his own hands, together with those of young Calas, had woven them. "Deign," he wrote, "to wear them, madame, one single time; then show your legs to whomsoever you wish, and if they do not confess that my silk is stronger and more beautiful than that of Provence and Italy I renounce the trade. Afterwards, give them to one of your women; they will last her a year."

As soon as the stockings had been sent, and this pretty letter with them, the "true shoe" of the duchess arrived, which he acknowledged in another letter worth several pairs of shoes. The duchess wore his stockings, and so much to the advantage of his weavers that when, in the following year, the watch-makers began their operations in his theatre he sent her six elegant specimens of their work. He pretended to send these watches to the *femme-de-chambre* of the duchess, and addressed his letter as if he were writing to that important personage: —

"Mademoiselle, we Capuchins are like the lovers in comedies, who address themselves always to the maids, in order to introduce themselves to the mistress. I take, then, the liberty of troubling you with

these lines, to ask you if we could take the extreme liberty of sending from our convent to the Duchess of Choiseul the six watches we have first made at Ferney. We believe them very pretty and very good; but all authors have that opinion of their works. We have thought that, in the season of marriage and festival, these products of our manufacture might be given as presents, either to the artists who may serve at those festivals, or to persons attached to the Dauphiness [Marie Antoinette]. Doubtless, their low price will please the Abbé Terray, since there are some watches among them which will cost only eleven louis each, and the dearest, set with diamonds, is put as low as forty-seven louis. The one with the portrait of the king in enamel and diamonds is only twenty-five louis, and the one in which is a portrait of the Dauphin, with one of the hands set with diamonds, is only seventeen. At Paris all these would cost a full third more.

“Some persons who know court secrets assure us that the minister for foreign affairs [Choiseul] and the first gentleman of the chamber [Richelieu] make presents in the king’s name on this occasion; but we do not know how to proceed in order to obtain the influence of your benevolent mistress; we fear that she will take us for impertinent people, who do not know what is becoming. Nevertheless, charity compels us to represent that it is necessary to aid our nascent colony at Ferney, which is composed at present of only sixty persons, who have nothing but their ten fingers to live upon.

“A colony and a manufactory, mademoiselle, are terrible things. We hope that your indulgent mistress will have pity upon us, notwithstanding the disagreeable things we have said to her. We are importunate, it is true, but you know that it is necessary to take the kingdom of heaven by violence, as another says. So, mademoiselle, we ask your powerful influence with the duchess, and we shall pray for her and for you, which will bring you great benefit. I entreat you on my own part, mademoiselle, to place me at her feet, which are fourteen royal inches long.

“I have the honor to remain, mademoiselle, your very dear brother,
FRANCOIS, Unworthy Capuchin.”

“Permit me, mademoiselle, to add to my letter that if monseigneur the duke, or madame the duchess, would show to the king the watch set with diamonds, with three *fleurs-de-lis*, and the one which bears his portrait, he would be astonished that such things could be done in our village.”

The duchess was well capable of doing her part in a gay correspondence of this nature. Her reply was written in the

name of two of her maids, Angélique and Marianne. It was in excellent taste and temper.

The absence of the duchess from Paris at the critical moment delayed the success of this little negotiation, but only delayed it. The minister bought the watches for the king, and used them in such a way as to advertise the new establishment most effectively. It is true, he omitted the form of paying for them; and, as he went soon afterwards out of office, the lord of Ferney was obliged to perform that duty for him. Voltaire was emboldened by the purchase to send to the ambassadors of France in foreign countries a kind of circular letter, recommending the Ferney watches to their protection:—

“MONSEIGNEUR, — I have the honor to inform your Excellency that the bourgeois of Geneva having, unfortunately, assassinated some of their fellow-citizens, and many families of good watchmakers having fled to a small estate which I possess in Gex, and the Duke of Choiseul having placed them under the protection of the king, I have had the happiness to put them in a condition to exercise their talents. They are the best artists of Geneva; they make all the varieties, and at a price more moderate than at any other manufactory. They produce in enamel all the portraits with which watch cases are usually adorned. They merit all the more the protection of your Excellency because they have much respect for the Catholic religion. It is under the auspices of the Duke de Choiseul that I entreat your Excellency to favor them, whether in giving them your orders, or in deigning to have them recommended to wholesale dealers of the best credit. I pray you, monseigneur, to pardon the liberty I take, in consideration of the advantage resulting to the kingdom from this enterprise.”¹

He soon had the pleasure of announcing to his angels and others that prosperity was smiling upon his colony. The village presented a busy scene. “That theatre which you know,” he wrote to one of his recent military visitors, “is changed into workshops. Where verses were formerly declaimed now gold is melted and watch wheels are polished. We must build new houses for the emigrants; for all the workmen of Geneva would come here if we had room to lodge them.”

The King of Prussia invited to Berlin eighteen families of the fugitive watchmakers of Geneva, binding himself to give them free lodging for twelve years, to exempt them from all

¹ Méuage et Finances de Voltaire, page 296. Paris, 1854.

taxation during that period, and to pay premiums for the apprentices whom they might instruct. It was thus that the watchmaking industry was founded in Berlin.

Before the end of the first year of watchmaking at his village, we see him sending to the Countess d'Argental a beautiful watch circled with diamonds, with the hands set in diamonds, all in the most exquisite style; "done," as he remarked, "by one of the best workmen in Europe." He vaunts in several letters the skill and taste of his artists in adorning their watches with diamonds, a fashion long ago abandoned. In 1773 he sent to the Countess Dubarry one of these glittering toys, with a letter in the style of the period, as obsolete now as watches blazing with gems.

Could he fail to mention the colony to his constant and admiring correspondent, Catherine II. of Russia? Her imperial reply was, "Send me watches of every kind, to the value of some thousand roubles; I will take them all." He communicated this vaguely magnificent order to his watchmakers, who, it appears, interpreted it too liberally. The empress said *some* thousands of roubles. They sent her eight thousand roubles' worth of watches. "I have scolded those poor artists severely," he wrote to the empress; "they have abused your goodness. I take the liberty, above all, to pray you, madame, not to pay all at once the sum of thirty-nine thousand two hundred and thirty-eight livres of France, which is the total of the two invoices. You are obliged to incur expenses so enormous that it is absolutely necessary to put a rein upon your generosity. Though my colonists should have to wait a year for half the amount, I should regard them as too fortunate, and I take upon myself the task of recommending patience to them. If your majesty is content with the goods and the prices, my makers say that they will execute whatever you may order."

What could an imperial lady reply to such a letter? "This expense will not ruin me," said she. "It would be very unfortunate for me if I was so reduced as not to have little sums of money wherever and whenever I happen to want them. I pray you not to judge of our finances by those of other states of Europe; you would do me wrong. Although the war with Turkey has lasted three years, we are still building, and every-

thing else goes on as in perfect peace." In a few weeks the money came from the empress, to the great joy of all the colony. By this time there were four firms of watchmakers at Ferney, and some of them began the manufacture of clocks also. Upon receiving this large sum from the Empress Catherine, it did not again occur to Voltaire to put a rein upon her generosity. After thanking her for the money in the name of his artists, he added, "I do not remember to have spoken to you of a pendulum clock we are now making; but if you wish one, you shall have it immediately. Your majesty has only to name the price, and I will answer for it that you shall be well served, and cheaply, too. This is perhaps not the time to propose a commerce of clocks and watches with China; but your universality does all things at once, and, in my opinion, that is the true greatness, the true power." He then sketched a plan for opening a trade with China in Ferney clocks and watches, under the auspices of the empress. She fell in with his suggestion, and directed him how to proceed.

The empress favored him also in other ways. He asked her for some seeds of the hardy Siberian cedar for his park. She replied, in December, 1771, "I shall send you immediately some nuts of the cedar of Siberia. I have had the governor directed to send them to me perfectly fresh. You will have them towards spring."

His perseverance in forcing the clocks and watches of Ferney upon the markets was extraordinary. If one request was fruitless, he wrote again and again, with increasing urgency. His rosy and jovial companion of other days, Cardinal de Bernis, was then living in magnificent profusion at Rome, as the ambassador of the King of France. To him Voltaire not only sent his circular letter, but was upon the point of consigning to him, through the Duke of Choiseul, a case of watches for sale in the imperial city. He wrote thus to the cardinal, in May, 1770: "The good work which I entreat from your Eminence is, simply, to deign to order one of your *valets de chambre*, or some other person in your confidence, to seek out an honest merchant, established at Rome, who may be willing to be our correspondent. I answer for it that he will find it to his advantage. The undertakers of the manufacture will send him an invoice as soon as you shall have accorded the favor which we ask of you."

De Bernis overlooked this important commission. Voltaire had the patience to wait eight months, and then remonstrated with the cardinal ambassador in the manner following:—

“I cannot help saying to you that you have profoundly afflicted me. I have not deserved this hardness on your part, and I mention it to you with extreme grief. Apparently, you have believed that my colony is only a poetic license. There is not a single ambassador who has not been solicitous to procure for us correspondence in foreign countries. You are the only one who has not had that goodness, and you have disdained to reply to me. What would it have cost you to have had one word said to the consul from France, whom you have at Rome? I expected this favor, from the benevolence which you have shown me. If you had wished, for yourself or for some one of your friends, a pretty watch, as good as those of England, and at only half the cost of English watches, you would have had it in ten days by the Lyons post.”

What wonder that the watchmaking thrrove? He was justified in saying to the Duke of Richelieu, “Give me a fair chance, and I am the man to build a city.” In three years the watches, clocks, and jewelry from Ferney went regularly to Spain, Algiers, Italy, Russia, Holland, Constantinople, Morocco, America, China, and Portugal, besides a large number of watches to Paris, upon which the dealers there, as the lord of Ferney bitterly complained, “had the impudence to put their own names.” By way of adapting his wares to their market, he procured, through the ambassadors, portraits of reigning kings, queens, and heirs apparent of the different countries, with which to adorn the watches consigned to them. Occasionally, of course, heavy losses occurred in dealing with regions so remote, and those losses fell upon himself. His caution, however, and the unrelenting vehemence with which he upheld and enforced the claims of his artists kept his losses within moderate bounds.

The success of the enterprise was proportioned to the ability and zeal of the founder. In 1773 the “artists” of Ferney sold four thousand watches, worth half a million francs, besides clocks, jewelry, and silks. In 1774, upon taking stock, they found that they had goods, machinery, and materials worth four hundred and fifty thousand francs. In 1775 the popula-

tion was twelve hundred. In 1776 the product amounted to six hundred thousand francs. Some of the manufacturers were beginning to accumulate property, and to buy or build houses for themselves, some of which cost more than twelve thousand francs.

Among the relics of this colony there is preserved the advertisement or circular issued by the first firm of watchmakers who settled in Ferney, and occupied the theatre as a workshop. This circular Voltaire was accustomed to inclose in his letters to ambassadors, kings, ministers, and empresses, to whom he recommended the wares specified, from "plain silver," at three louis, to repeaters, at forty-two louis. It is probable that the author of "Zaïre" had a hand in the composition of this prospectus. To style the little group of dependent fugitives working in his dismantled theatre **THE ROYAL MANUFACTORY OF FERNEY**, and to print the words in capital letters, was very much in his manner; as was also his hint to other natives of Geneva that a gracious King of France was waiting to favor and exempt them also, if they chose to come out from under the arrogance of the bourgeois sons of Calvin. He was the man to build a city; Chicago would have valued him.

In many letters, as well as, occasionally, in his works, he dwells upon the perfect friendship in which his colonists lived together. In 1776 he wrote:—

"A thing which, I believe, deserves some notice is that, though this colony was composed of Catholics and Protestants, it would have been impossible to divine that there were in Ferney two different religions. I have seen the wives of the Genevan and Swiss colonists prepare with their own hands *reposoirs* for the procession of the festival of the holy sacrament. They took part in this procession with profound respect; and M. Hugonet, the new curé of Ferney, a man as tolerant as he is generous, thanked them publicly for it in his sermon. When a Catholic was sick, Protestants went to take care of him, and in their turn received from him the same assistance. It was the fruit of the principles of humanity which M. de Voltaire had inculcated in all his works, and, particularly, in his 'Treatise upon Tolerance.' He always said that men are brothers, and he proved it by facts. 'Do you see,' he would say to the travelers who came to see him, 'that inscription upon the church which I built? DEO EREXIT VOLTAIRE. To God,

the common father of all men.' In fact, this was perhaps the only church among us dedicated to God alone."¹

In writing to Madame du Deffand of his colony and its brilliant success, he says, "All this I have done from pure vanity. God, as we are assured, made all things for his own glory; we must imitate him as far as we can." In 1824, when Albert Gallatin visited his native city, he testified to the completeness of the victory over ancient prejudice: "Speaking of old bourgeois, the distinction does not exist; *citoyens*, *bourgeois*, and *natifs* are, in every respect, civil and political, on the same footing."

¹ Commentaire Historique sur les Œuvres de l'Auteur de la Henriade. 2 Œuvres de Voltaire, 195.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

PRIVATE LIFE AT FERNEY.

LET us pay our respects first to the lady of the house, Madame Denis. She did not remain very long at Paris, in consequence of the explosion of March, 1768, but returned to Ferney in October, 1769. Madame d'Epinaï's description of this lady is familiar to many: —

“Voltaire's niece is enough to make one die of laughing. She is a fat little woman, as round as a ball, of about fifty; ugly, good-humored, an enormous liar, without ill-intention or ill-nature, without talent, while seeming talented; forever screaming at the top of her voice, laying down the law, talking politics, tagging verses, reasoning, unreasonable. All this without too much pretension, and without giving any offense to any one. Through all peeps out a pervading tinge of partiality for the male sex. She adores her uncle, both as uncle and as man. Voltaire loves her, laughs at her, and holds her in reverence.”

Such she may have really appeared to a distinguished guest of a few days, and such, indeed, she was when in equilibrium. But she occasionally lost her equilibrium, and stormed about the château like a tornado. Of all the tastes and pursuits of her uncle there was only one with which she sympathized; but, also, that one was his first and last love, the drama. She wrote a comedy, and escaped through him the disaster of having it played; she began, and perhaps finished, a tragedy. She played so well that her uncle went the length of comparing her with Clairon, much to the amusement of his correspondents. But they had few other interests in common. She had no taste for the delights of the country; she was not moved by the troubles or the triumphs of the Ferney watchmakers; science and history were naught to her; and, as to *l'Infâme*, it was indifferent to her whether the monster were crushed or

inflated. Madame Denis was a child of Paris and a votary of its commoner pleasures. During her husband's life-time she had lived in a garrisoned town, where, as she wrote in 1738 to Thieriot, "I have a good house and four hundred officers at my disposal, who are all very obliging, and among whom I find a dozen amiable, who often sup with me." Afterwards, she was a gay widow in Paris for many years, with a considerable revenue and great prestige. Hence she endured Ferney so long as it was filled with guests and tumult, and pined always for a hotel at Paris.

Her uncle bore her humors with the patience of a philosopher who had lived sixteen years with a Marquise du Châtelet; and even when she had carried her violence too far he was placable. After her abrupt departure from Ferney, in 1768, he wrote of her conduct with charitable forbearance to his niece, Madame de Florian, and her husband: —

"It is just and necessary, my dear Picards [they were then living in Picardy], that I should speak to you with confidence. You see the sad effects of temper. You know how much of it Madame Denis has sometimes shown to you. Recall the scene which M. de Florian experienced. She has made me experience one not less cruel. It is lamentable that neither her reason nor her ordinary amiability can assuage in her soul those violent tempests of passion which overturn, sometimes, and desolate society. I am persuaded that the secret cause of those violences which escaped her from time to time was her natural aversion to a country life, — an aversion which could only be mitigated by a great crowd of company, by festivals and magnificence. This tumultuous life suited neither my age of seventy-four years, nor the feebleness of my health. Moreover, I found myself much embarrassed by the delay of the Duke of Wurtemberg, the Marshal de Richelieu and other great lords in paying my annuities (amounting to a suspension of a hundred thousand francs a year). She has gone to Paris to collect some of the remains, while I occupy myself with the affairs of Germany. Notwithstanding this actual derangement of my affairs, I allow her at Paris twenty thousand francs per annum, in addition to her own revenue of twelve thousand."

With Madame Denis went not only the crowd of guests that filled the château, but also Marie Corneille and her husband, who seldom again lived long at Ferney. When, after an absence of twenty months, Madame Denis returned, Wagrière did not rejoice to see her again at the head of the estab-

lishment. Such ladies are trying to good servants. "She returns, doubtless," said he, "to quarrel again with her uncle." It was his opinion that if she had remained at Paris, instead of drawing her uncle thither, he would have lived some years longer than he did. We are to imagine her, then, the mistress of the house once more, a round, bustling, boisterous dame of sixty, happy in the midst of gay company, from which her uncle as gladly escaped.

The lord of the château claims our regards next. The good Wagnière has scattered throughout his volume several pleasing recollections of his chief, to which the reader is entitled. He saw Voltaire at all times and in all circumstances. From fourteen he grew up in his house, married in it, reared in it those children of his who played about the room while their father plied the too assiduous pen to Voltaire's dictation. He gives us many details of life in the interior which but for him would have remained unknown. He, too, like other inmates, scouts the idea of his lord being avaricious. He reports him careful, exact, and vigilant in affairs of business, not disposed to yield a sou of a claim, and a stickler for the lowest price; but, at the same time, bountiful in hospitality, lenient to poor debtors, and practically helpful to the unfortunate.

HIS LOVE OF THE DRAMA.

"No one understood better than M. de Voltaire all the niceties of the art of declamation. When some of his pieces were rehearsed in his presence, he was almost continually beside himself, so warmly did he enter into the various passions. It often happened that he repeated the whole piece himself. Once, at a representation of 'Zaïre,' in which he played the part of Lusignan, at the moment of his recognition of his children, he was so overcome with emotion that he forgot his part, and the prompter, who was also crying, could not give him the word. M. de Voltaire improvised half a dozen new and extremely fine verses. Unfortunately, I could not write them down at the moment, nor those which he composed while playing Zopire, in the scene with Mahomet, nor those which he added on the stage to his part of Trissotin, in the 'Femmes Savantes,' in the scene with Vadius, which were very comic. He did not remember them himself a moment after. The same thing happened in several other parts which I saw him play. I heard him also, after a performance at Tourney, speak a good while in verse to M. Marmontel, who, astonished, remained silent, and knew not what to reply to him.

“A very singular thing was that no one learned his own verses with more difficulty than himself. This arose, doubtless, from the impetuosity of his imagination, which continually mastered him to such a degree that, in the greatest warmth of a conversation in which he seemed wholly absorbed, or at a time when he appeared the most interested in a game of chess (the only game he liked), he would send for me to write out some verses which he had just composed, or some ideas which had occurred to him; and if I did not arrive instantly he would run to write them himself in his memorandum book, or upon the first scrap of paper he could lay hands on.

“He had an astonishing facility in composing verses, which he usually wrote with his own hand, when the work was of some length. He never (or seldom) wrote out a plan of his plays. After having arranged the plan in his head, he executed it at the same time that he wrote the verses. His letters, his prose works, and his short pieces of poetry he dictated with such rapidity that very often I was obliged to ask him to stop, as I could not write fast enough to keep up with him. He even read while dictating.

“What plainly showed, in my opinion, the extent and force of genius in this extraordinary man was that I very often saw him correct in the same hour proofs of history, plays, philosophy, metaphysics, tales, and romances, making in each corrections and considerable additions with the greatest facility, notwithstanding the extreme diversity of the subjects.

“Although he learned and retained with difficulty his own verses, he knew by heart all the good verses of the other poets, and often recited them with enthusiasm. When he was present at the representation of their dramas, he would be heard reciting in a low tone the beautiful passages before the actors had pronounced them; and when they declaimed them badly he would say, in an under-tone, ‘Ah! the wretch! the hangman! To murder in that way the beauties of Corneille or Racine!’ When, on the contrary, those passages were well delivered, he would often cry out, and pretty loudly, too, ‘Beautiful! Admirable!’ And this he would do, no matter who the author was, although he was accused of jealousy towards all. It was a little disagreeable to be seated next to him at the theatre, because he could not contain himself when he was strongly moved. Tranquil at first, he grew warm by degrees; his voice, his feet, his cane, were more or less audible. He would rise half-way from his chair, then seat himself again. All at once he would stand erect, appearing to be six inches higher than he really was. It was then that he made the most noise. Professional actors, for this reason, dreaded to play before him. He could not endure to hear people declaim or read beautiful verses

badly; still less that they should criticise them too minutely or unjustly.

“I shall relate on this subject a little anecdote. M. de Voltaire, after dinner, used to go into the drawing-room, where, ordinarily, he remained an hour or two with his guests, after which he would retire, and go into his study to work until supper-time; or, if the weather was fine, especially in summer, he would get into his old carriage, with a blue body sprinkled with stars of gold, with mouldings carved and gilt, to enjoy the pleasure of a ride into the country, or in his forest, — sometimes alone, sometimes with a friend, or with ladies of the company. One day, after he had gone to ride, a discussion arose in the drawing-room upon the difficulties of French poetry, upon its beauties and defects. A literary man sustained that in the passages the most perfect French poetry was still filled with faults. To prove it, he took up a volume of Racine which was lying upon the mantel-piece, selected one of the most beautiful scenes, and with his pencil marked with a cross all the verses which he considered defective. The next day M. de Voltaire, while returning this volume to his library, opened it by chance. He saw all those crosses, and, being very much put out, wrote at the bottom of the page that had the most crosses, ‘Ah, hangman! if I had you, I would teach you to crucify in this way the inimitable Racine!’”

HIS LITERARY HABITS.

“The memory of M. de Voltaire was wonderful. A hundred times he has said to me, ‘Look into such a work, into such a volume, about such a page, and see if there is not such a thing!’ It rarely happened that he was mistaken, although he may not have opened the book in twelve or fifteen years.

“He had a way, when he received a new work, to run over it rapidly, reading some lines of each page. If he perceived something which merited attention, he would place a mark opposite; after which, he would read the whole again very attentively, and even twice, when the work appeared to him interesting and well written; and he also made remarks in the margin. Some of these were very curious. There was a prodigious quantity of slips of paper in his books, upon which there were some words written with his own hand or mine. He was naturally gay and sprightly, and this is why a certain habit of his always struck me. During conversations or discussions upon serious or important subjects, he would remain a long while without saying anything, listening to every one else, his head leaning forward, and seeming to be in a kind of stupor or imbecility. When the disputants had nearly exhausted their arguments, he seemed to rouse him-

self, and would begin by discussing their opinions with order and precision, then advance his own. By degrees we would see him grow warm, until, at length, he was no longer the same man; there appeared in all his person something of the supernatural, and the company was carried away by the vehemence of his discourse, by his action, and by the force of his reasoning."

HIS MORAL QUALITIES.

"It was the same with his anger; it came upon him only by degrees, and it was necessary, as it were, to force him to it. It was always the effect of repeated offenses and long resistance to his wishes. But his pity, his sensibility, were as prompt as they were genuine, although his enemies have so often said the contrary. My gratitude owes him this just testimony, and certainly no one more than myself had the opportunity of knowing his real character and the goodness of his heart. Although he was of a disposition extremely sensitive. I have never known any one more open to reason than he, and who yielded to reason with more readiness, although at first he may have been of a different opinion. I cannot say too much of his moral qualities, the possession of which has been so often and so unjustly denied to him.

"All Europe knew the interest which he took in several famous trials; but there were many other acts which equally proved his humanity, though little known beyond the limits of Ferney, and sometimes not even beyond his own house. Two of his servants had stolen from him articles of considerable value, and the police, who had been informed of the fact by public rumor, had begun to make inquiries. Meanwhile, M. de Voltaire, having learned where those people were concealed, charged me at once to go and find them, and to tell them to avoid hanging by an immediate flight, since, if they were arrested, he would not be able to save their lives. He told me also to give them the money necessary to facilitate their escape and pursue their journey. I added, by his order, that he was satisfied of their repentance, and that he hoped his indulgence would induce them to reform. Those wretched men were touched, and voluntarily mentioned where some of the stolen goods were hidden. They succeeded in escaping the next night, and in reaching a foreign country. Long after, M. de Voltaire learned that from that time they had conducted themselves honestly, although they had been hanged in effigy.

"A man who had done a great deal of harm in the village was at length detected. Upon the point of being arrested, he tried the plan of coming with his wife to implore the forgiveness of M. de Voltaire. They threw themselves at his feet in despair, crying and protesting

their repentance. M. de Voltaire was so much moved that he could not restrain his tears, and knelt himself to lift them up, saying to them, 'Go upon your knees before God, and not before me, who am only a man. Away with you! I forgive you, and do so no more.'

"All his colonists adored him. Upon his recovery from a serious illness in 1775, all the inhabitants of Ferney were so transported with joy that the young people formed themselves into military companies, both of dragoons and infantry, and gave some very pretty *fêtes*. On St. Francis' Day there was a superb illumination of all Ferney, with a fine display of fire-works given by Madame Denis. The young people came every Sunday to dance in his château, where they were provided with all sorts of refreshments. He would come to see them dance, cheered them on, and shared the joys of his colonists, whom he called his children. One of the companies of dragoons, at the time of that convalescence of which I have just spoken, caused a gold medal to be struck, bearing the portrait of M. de Voltaire, to be given to the man who should show the most skill in the musket exercise. The infantry company went to the expense of a second prize, which consisted of a medal in honor of M. Turgot, and to thank him for having (at Voltaire's solicitation) freed the land of Gex [from unequal and burdensome imposts]. I had a third struck, like the first, except the initial of my name, which was added on the back below the inscription."

HIS LOVE OF LABOR.

"Labor was necessary to his life. Most of the time, we worked eighteen to twenty hours a day. He slept very little, and made me get up several times in the night. When he was composing a piece for the theatre, he was in a fever. His imagination tormented him, and left him no repose. He used to say then, 'I have the devil in me, as a man must have to write verses.' He committed no excesses of any kind, except in labor alone. He was very moderate in drinking and in eating. Formerly he made a great use of coffee; but in the last fifteen years of his life he took, at the most, only two or three cups a day, and with cream. With ladies, his amiability and politeness were unique and enchanting. When he was at work, we were often obliged to remind him that he had taken no nourishment. He had no fixed times for his meals, for going to bed, or for getting up. In general, he passed the greater part of his life in bed, at work. He was, speaking generally, of an extremely strong constitution, although almost every day he suffered the pains of indigestion, which often put him into bad humor. He then took some cassia, which he used two or three times a week, as well as *lavemens au savon*. When he had been angry with any of his servants, if he saw them near him some

hours after, he would say in their hearing, 'I was cross with my people a while ago; I scolded them. *Mon Dieu!* they must forgive me, for I suffer like a wretch.' Such excuses plainly show the goodness of his heart.

"He thought very little of physicians in general; he understood well his own constitution, and treated himself. I never saw him send to seek medical advice. When physicians came to see him, he spoke of medicine with them, and discoursed of it very well."

HIS DISPOSITION AND Demeanor.

"By nature he was extremely merry. He never permitted himself to ridicule any one to his face, nor to say disobliging things in conversation, unless he was forced to do so. He knew how to put himself in agreeable relations with everybody; in repartee he was prompt, delightful, and refined. His way of telling stories was very pleasant; he loved to argue with persons of intelligence and information. Often, however, he received coldly enough those who came to see him from mere curiosity, and had nothing to say. It is true, also, that he sometimes inspired those who came to see him for the first time with a kind of timidity and respectful fear, which they could not control.

"He did not value himself upon following the fashion in his clothes and in his mode of dressing himself, and thus he did not appear elegant to young people. But he had a singular love for cleanliness and neatness, and he was always himself scrupulously clean. He had a very fine sense of smell. His eyes were brilliant and filled with fire; he never made any use of spectacles; he often washed his eyes with pure, cool water. In the last years of his life he did not shave, but pulled out his beard with little pincers. He was somewhat tall of stature, but very thin. His countenance had nothing disagreeable in extreme old age, and he must have been very good-looking in his youth. He was always courageous, and this to an extraordinary degree even when very old.

"When he saw that persons questioned him from a real desire for instruction, he was obliging enough in reply. When my children, who were still very young, interrupted him with their questions when he was dictating something to me, and I wished to silence them, he would say to me, 'Let them talk; we should always reply with exact truth to children, and explain to them what they ask, considering their age, and not deceive them.' He had the goodness to do so with them.

"It is a strange thing, and one to which I can testify, that, despite the homage rendered him and the praise bestowed upon him, both by speech and writing, he did not at all believe in his glory. On the contrary, his modesty was extreme and sincere. Perhaps it was to this

conviction that the republic of letters owed a great part of the works that he composed. He always labored as if he had still to make his reputation. He has been reproached, and with some reason, for having often repeated himself in his various writings. When I called his attention to this, he would reply to me, 'I know it well; but there are cases in which it is necessary to redouble the strokes of the hammer. Certain truths cannot be repeated too often to men. Besides, the other work, in which I have said the same thing, may be unknown to some who will read this one.'

We may presume that the secretary's memory deceived him a little when he recorded that his chief and himself labored eighteen or twenty hours a day. They may have done so sometimes, until Wagnière was reinforced by Antoine Bigex, a poor scholar whom Baron Grimm discovered at Paris, in the lowly place of floor-rubber. He was a native of a village in Savoy, near Lake Geneva, where he studied Latin, read Voltaire, and so spoiled himself for contented peasant life in an obscure hamlet. Grimm rescued him from his floor-rubbing, made him his secretary and man of confidence, and then lost him by giving him a holiday to go and visit his native place. On the way home, Bigex stopped at Ferney, as other travelers did, to pay his homage to Voltaire, who received and entertained him. "Having learned from his cook," says the baron, "that M. Bigex labored with me in the vineyard of the Lord, and wishing to relieve his secretary, he asked from me this good workman. It was like cutting off my right hand, but I consented with joy to the good fortune of M. Bigex, who has since labored under the immediate orders of his master, who is our master in all things."

Bigex served his chief in various ways. Besides being copyist, witness to signatures, messenger, and commissioner, he lent his name to several of his lord's minor pieces. Voltaire gravely attributes them to "M. Bigex," or "Bugex," or to "Simon Bigex;" and, in truth, M. Bigex was a man of scholarship and humor.

Another inmate was the famous Father Adam, a Jesuit priest, who did not leave France when his order was expelled by Madame de Pompadour, in 1764. He was chess-player to the lord of the château. Voltaire met him during his residence at Colmar in 1754, and when he bought the estate of

Ferney he found him again in a convent within a mile of the house. They often played chess together; Voltaire found him amusing; and, in 1763, the priest took up his abode in the château, where he remained thirteen years. In an establishment of thirty busy people he appears to have been the only idler, and he fell into the habit of relieving the monotony of his existence by quarreling with his companions. We read in Grimm of his accusing Bigex of stealing fruit by night from a garden, and of Bigex summoning him before a court of Gex on a charge of calumny. Voltaire admits that this Adam was "not the first man of the world," and Wagnière reports that, as old age drew on, he became so morose and quarrelsome that Voltaire, after two warnings, dismissed him from his house with a present of ten louis; the priest having property of his own worth nine hundred francs a year. For several years, however, he earned his maintenance by affording the master of Ferney a recreation of which he was very fond and a little ashamed.

Cousin D'Aumard is frequently mentioned in the correspondence as a member of the family at Ferney. Marguerite d'Aumard was the name of Voltaire's mother, of whom we know so little, and need to know so much. Cousin d'Aumard, a relation of that mother, a young officer of ordinary abilities and not the best habits, came to Les Délices in 1759, as poor young cousins will to the houses of rich old ones, and while there he was attacked with what seemed rheumatism. Voltaire sent him to the baths of Aix, with no good result. Dr. Tronchin ordered him thither a second time, but he returned to Les Délices no better. Worse symptoms appeared; surgery was necessary; but, after eighteen months of elaborate treatment by the most noted physician in Europe, the patient was worse than ever, and lay upon his bed helpless. In 1761 Voltaire wrote of him that "it required four persons to move him from one bed to another;" and he remained paralyzed to the neck, unable to lift a finger or stir a foot during the rest of his life. He lived about ten years in this condition at Voltaire's house, and, so far as we can judge, he could not have been more carefully attended, nor his case more profoundly studied, if he had been a king's son. Among others whom Voltaire consulted was M. Bagieu, surgeon-gen-

eral of the royal foot-guards, who would necessarily know much of maladies of that kind. He described the case to this surgeon with a care and minuteness that left nothing obscure, and employed all that exquisite epistolary art of his to secure to his letter the most zealous attention. In many letters he moralizes upon the hapless condition of the young D'Aumard, stricken down in the flower of his youth, and lying helpless in his upper room, fed by a nurse like a child, hearing the distant gayety of the château, in which he was never again to take part.

Voltaire was a true Frenchman in his regard for kindred. We find him, in letters to his Paris notary, directing him to make certain payments to two of his nephews, the Abbé Mignot and M. d'Hornoy, "on account of the little sum [of eighteen hundred francs a year each] which they give me the pleasure of accepting from me." It is highly convenient to have such an uncle and cousin as he was in a numerous family. Witness this letter from him to a distant connection, called by courtesy, in the province where he lived, his "nephew," but who really was a relation of the late Denis, husband of his niece:—

[Ferney, October 22, 1770. To M. de la Houlière, commandant at Salses.] "My dear nephew after the fashion of Brittany, — for you are my nephew, and not my cousin, — learn, if you please, to assume the titles which belong to you.

"You lament, in your letter of September 20th, that you are not a brigadier in the armies of the king; and yet you are one. Fie! how wrong it is to cry famine while you are sitting upon a heap of corn! To prove to you that you are mistaken in saying that you are not a brigadier, read, if you please, a copy of what the Duke of Choiseul has had the goodness to write to me with his plump and beneficent hand, on the 14th of October:—

"'I did not know, my dear Voltaire, that M. de la Houlière was your nephew; but I know that he deserved to be, and to be a brigadier also, and that he has served us well, and that he employs himself in agriculture, which is another service to the state, at least as meritorious as that of destroying. Your letter makes me acquainted with the interest you take in M. de la Houlière, and I dare flatter myself that the king will not refuse me the favor of naming him brigadier the next time I wait upon him for the transaction of business,' etc., etc.

“M. Gayot [secretary of the minister], to whom also I took the precaution of writing, answers me, —

“‘The good-will of the minister has left nothing for me to do in securing success. I shall have, at most, the trifling merit of accelerating, so far as may be in my power, the dispatch of the favor granted,’ etc., etc.

“Sleep, then, upon either ear, my dear little nephew, and impart this little news to your brother. It is true, he did not send me word of the marriage of his daughter; but he is a farmer-general, which is a much greater dignity than that of brigadier, inasmuch as farmers-general have *brigadiers* in their service. Not long ago, Brigadier Court-Michon was announced at my house; he was a clerk in the custom-house.¹

“Madame Denis, who is veritably your cousin, makes you the most tender compliments; I present my very humble obeisance to madame *la brigadière*.”

During Madame Denis's absence in Paris, the pensions which he paid to relations amounted to thirty-two thousand francs per annum. To friends, also, he was generous upon occasion, though never lavish. Upon learning that his staunch ally, Damienville, had left his affairs in disorder and an old servant unprovided for, he sent a sum of money to the man. Thieriot always unable to live within a limited but sufficient income, was not forgotten in his old age. To relieve his embarrassment in 1769, Voltaire gave him the manuscript of his comedy “*La Dépositaire*,” which he had had for some time in his portfolio. He informed Thieriot that it was “the work of a young man of great promise, who did not wish to be known;” and he authorized his old comrade, if the censors were over-rigorous, to change *piety* to *probity*, and *dévo*t to *bigot*. “In my opinion,” he added, “it will be a very pleasant thing to make a play succeed upon the stage which exhibits an estimable harlot [Ninon Lenclos] converting an imbecile devotee into a worthy man.” The censors thought otherwise, and forbade the representation. The comedy was published in 1772, but it was never performed in public during the author's life-time.

It was often in his power, through his singular knowledge of business and his familiarity with influential persons, to render

¹ In the old army of France, brigadier was about equivalent to our lieutenant-colonel; but the word brigadier was also applied to a grade of civil servants of the crown.

great services to others with small cost of money to himself. But in these cases he often expended a great deal of labor and nice calculation. During the scarcity of grain in 1771, he enabled his poor neighbors of Gex to buy their wheat at a moderate price by importing a quantity from Sicily, where he had often before bought grain in the way of commerce. He sent for two hundred sacks, as Wagnière records, which he sold in small portions at something less than cost. He had been for forty years a speculator in provisions, and knew where to look for the commodity wanted. Indeed, he was still amusing himself in commerce, and continued to do so as long as he lived. In 1773, he wrote to the Countess d'Argental, "We have — some Genevans and myself — sent a ship to Bengal. For my part, I shall still laugh if the fifty-nine persons who are in our ship eat up all our investment, and make fools of us, as seems but too probable." Again, in 1775, to the Count d'Argental, "I must tell you that I have sent a ship to India, with some associates. The lightning struck our vessel, and knocked it all to pieces. I have, thank God, a lightning-rod [*anti-tonnerre*] in my garden. It would be too much to have an affair with the thunder upon the Indian seas and in my flower-garden at the same time. The devotees would make too much fun of me."

It is interesting, also, to observe the mingling of gayety in his dunning letters, which were numerous and urgent. He writes to his Colmar friend, Advocate Dupont, of the excuses of one of his debtors: "He tells me I am the son of Apollo and of Plutus; but if he sends me no money, Plutus will disinherit me, and Apollo will not console me. He says he has spent his money digging in the mines; but he greatly elongates my *mines*.¹ It is not in our contract that he should seek for gold, but that he should send me some; and the true way of not having any to give me is to imagine that there is some in the Vosges mountains. The true mines are his vines well cultivated. . . . Father Adam always wins at chess; he sends you his compliments."

Madame Denis would have found Ferney a cheerful abode if she had had the mind to enjoy it. President de Brosse, whose land supplied wood to the château, remarked that fifteen fires were kept burning in it in cold weather. Her uncle was one

¹ Countenance.

of those to whom nothing whatever is void of interest. He pleased himself in planning gardens that were unlike all others in the world, with vines hanging in festoons as far as the eye could see; nothing regular, and all enchanting. "I love my oxen," he writes; "I caress them; they give me gracious looks. I have had a pair of wooden shoes made for myself." Yes; and in 1771 a wonderful stone was found in the bladder of one of his oxen, such as our Indians occasionally find in buffaloes, and carry about with them as "big medicine." He sent it to a veterinary surgeon in Lyons for explanation, with one of his merry letters. The scarcity of grain in 1771 set him upon experimenting in food, and he assured his tenants that a bread made of half flour and half potato was more nourishing and more savory than bread of flour alone.

All things, all persons, all subjects, near and remote, could interest him; so that in scarcely any endurable circumstances could life have been tedious to him. "We have in Geneva," he wrote once, "a woman one hundred and two years old, who has three deaf-and-dumb children. They converse with their mother from morning till night, now by moving their lips, now by moving their fingers; they play very well all games, know the gossip of the city, and laugh at the follies of their neighbors as well as the greatest chatterers can. They understand all that is said from the motion of the lips. In a word, they are very good company." It was to this lady, Madame Lullin, that he sent a bouquet and a stanza upon her hundredth birthday:—

"Nos grandpères vous virent belle;
Par votre esprit vous plaisez à cent ans.
Vous méritiez d'épouser Fontenelle,
Et d'être sa veuve longtemps."¹

¹ Our grandfathers saw you beautiful; by your *esprit* you please at a hundred years. You deserved to marry Fontenelle, and to be his widow a long time.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

HIS PRODIGIOUS REPUTATION.

DURING these later years he was sustaining the splendid burden of a reputation such as no man of letters had ever borne, or is likely ever to bear again. A reputation savors of the public that bestows it, as well as of the individual who possesses it. What a public that must have been which drew from Shakespeare his wondrous succession of dramas, and gave him in return the due reward of honor and fortune! The timid souls in England, the dull and the gloomy, had mostly gone into Puritanism, leaving for Shakespeare the courageous and genial spirits, who knew how to be virtuous without quarreling with their cakes and ale. Shakespeare loved his pit, and occasionally gave it a friendly glance over the foot-lights, exchanging jokes with it, as in the grave-diggers' scene of "Hamlet." Voltaire spoke to a Europe at once susceptible and ignorant; not destitute of literary culture, but accustomed for many ages to think only in ways prescribed. His rapid reviews of history, his limpid biographical narratives, his careful summaries of science, were read by people to whom free and broad treatment of modern subjects was a novelty; and his productions of that nature were so much glory added to the lustre of the finest literary gift possessed by a Frenchman of that century.

A fame purely literary lies in a very narrow compass; it is probable that one half the inhabitants of the British islands knew nothing of Shakespeare, not even his name; and, among ourselves, try Irving, Cooper, Longfellow, Whittier, Holmes, Lowell, Howells, upon the average man of town or country, and see how many recognize these honored names. But Voltaire had mingled in affairs other than literary: he had defended Calas, Sirven, and Covelle; he had been arrested at Frankfort; he had been associated in various ways with kings

and Popes: he had had the insolence to found a city. Moreover, his reputation was sixty years old, and during that long period he had every year done things to widen, increase, or intensify it. The result was that he had to suffer and enjoy in his old age a reputation that was immense and unique. We may say that, during the last fifteen years of his life, there were two Popes in Europe: one at Rome, the Pope of its ignorance; the other at Ferney, the Pope of its intelligence, — both incomplete. Ferney represented all in human achievement that adorns, cheers, exalts, amuses the life of intelligent leisure; while there was nothing to be said for the Roman Pope except that he was indispensable to the heavy-laden majority, who had nothing very cheering in their lives or deaths but what he provided. He gave them every Sunday morning the sublimest drama ever presented, set to the best music ever composed, and on every Sunday afternoon a holiday free from the baleful shadow of sabbatarian gloom. When philosophers do as much for the toiling sons of men, they, too, in their turn, may rule the world; for the basis of empire is ever the same, — the love and confidence of the common people.

Those who attribute our loss of leisure to cheap postage may be interested to know that the lord of Ferney rose in revolt against the postman eighty years before cheap postage had made that functionary the tyrant he now is. So many authors sent him manuscripts to correct, to admire, and to introduce, so many readers wrote to express admiration, dissent, or warning, that, sometimes, as he tells us, his postage for one day amounted to a hundred francs. "The number of fools, my *confrères*," he wrote to the Abbé d'Olivet, in 1761, "whom the rage of writing possesses, is immense; and that of the other fools, who write anonymous letters, is not less considerable." Soon after settling at Ferney he caused to be inserted in the "Mercure" of Paris a notice to this effect: "Several persons having complained of not receiving acknowledgment of packets sent to Ferney, to Tournay, or to Les Délices, notice is given that, on account of the immense number of those packets, it has become necessary to decline receiving all that do not come from persons with whom the proprietor has the honor to be acquainted."

He had also his ample share of eccentric correspondence.

In 1770 a letter was found in the post-office at Paris, addressed thus : —

“ To the Prince of Poets, Perpetual Phenomenon of Glory, Philosopher of the Nations, Mercury of Europe, Orator of his Native Land, Promoter of Citizens, Historian of Kings, Panegyrist of Heroes, Critic of the Critics, Arbitrer of Taste, Painter in all the Styles, the Same at every Age, Protector of the Arts, Benefactor of Talents as well as of True Merit, Admirer of Genius, Scourge of Persecutors, Enemy of Fanatics, Defender of the Oppressed, Father of Orphans, Model for the Rich, Support of the Indigent, Example of the Sublime Virtues.”

Judicious post-office clerks, trained to decipher and interpret superscriptions, could not be at a loss to know where to send this epistle. It reached Ferney in due time, where Wagnière took it from the carrier's hands, and conveyed it to his master. “ He would not receive it,” reports the secretary, “ saying it was from some simpleton [*fou*], and sent it back to the post-office.” Meanwhile, it was published in the papers ; upon which the acute Fréron inferred that the superscription was Voltaire's own work, since it must have been written either by him or by a madman. The letter, however, was traced to the Abbé de Launay, an inmate of the debtors' prison in Paris, who was accustomed to write in some such way to any one whom he thought likely to send him money. The direction of this letter was scarcely a burlesque of the estimation in which Voltaire was really held by large numbers of people.

He wrote continually, too, upon the subject which can never cease to be the one most interesting to reflecting minds ; and hence he received, as he says, “ every eight days,” a letter from an inquiring soul, wishing him to send the true interpretation of the universe by return of post. He said to Madame du Deffand, “ A burgomaster of Middelbourg [*Holland*], whom I do not know, wrote me some time since to ask me, as a friend, if there is a God, and, in case there is one, if he cares for us ; if matter is eternal ; if it can think ; if the soul is immortal. And he begged me to reply to him as soon as I had received his letter.”

At that time the influence of a crowned head in giving cur-

rency and fashion to an author was very great, — so great that one of Voltaire's most remarkable triumphs was that he should have won "good company" to his side against the sovereigns of his own country. But, in truth, there were two courts then in France: one presided over by the king and queen, the other by the king and mistress; and Voltaire managed to stand well with the court whose approval gave prestige and fashion. His relations with other sovereigns all tended to give currency to his works and weight to his name. The preference of Catherine II. was, as we have seen, decided and manifest. It was not merely that her letters to him teemed with eulogy; she trumpeted him on all occasions; his bust adorned her boudoir; his works were always upon her familiar shelves, and often in her hands. More than this, she gave him the signal homage of publicly acting upon his advice.

"I suppose [she wrote to him in December, 1768] that you believe me a little inconsistent. I besought you, about a year ago, to send me everything which has ever been written by the author whose works I love best to read. I received, in the month of May last, the parcel which I desired, accompanied by the bust of the most illustrious man of our age. I felt an equal satisfaction with both; for six months they have been the most beautiful ornament of my rooms, and my daily study; but, hitherto, I have not acknowledged their arrival, nor given you my thanks. This is how I reasoned: A morsel of paper covered with bad writing, filled with bad French, is a poor way of thanking such a man; it is necessary rather to pay my duty to him by some act which could please him. Different things have presented themselves, the detail of which would be too long. At last, I thought that the best thing I could do would be to give an example in my own person which could be useful to men. I remembered that, by good fortune, I had not had the small-pox. I wrote to England for an inoculator; and the famous Dr. Dimsdale resolved to come to Russia. He inoculated me on the 12th of October, 1768. I have not been in bed a single moment, and I have received company every day. I am going immediately to have my only son [Paul] inoculated. . . . Besides that, inoculation is going on at present at Petersburg in three schools, and in a hospital established under the eye of M. Dimsdale. . . . I forgot to say to you that I have increased the little medicine taken during inoculation by three or four excellent specifics, which I recommend to every man of good sense not to neglect on such an occasion. It is to have read to him 'L'Ecoisaise,' 'Candide,' 'L'Ingénu,'

‘L’Homme aux Quarante Ecus,’ and ‘La Princesse de Babylone.’ There is no chance after that of feeling the least inconvenience. . . . I take my pen in hand once more to pray you to avail yourself of this fur cloak against the cutting wind and cold of the Alps, which, they say, inconvenience you sometimes.”

When an empress writes so to her favorite author, we can imagine what the court does, and the fashionable world. She sent him also a snuff-box, turned on a lathe by her own “lovely and august hands,” and adorned by her portrait. The fur pelisse and the snuff-box he acknowledged in verses of eulogy, in the manner of the age, and he seized the occasion of a new edition of his works to dedicate to her the volume upon Universal History, which serves as the introduction to the “Essai sur les Mœurs.” Casanova, who was in Russia when this volume arrived, says that an edition of three thousand copies, printed in Petersburg, was exhausted in eight days, and that every Russian who could pretend to read French carried a copy about with him in his pocket. Voltaire, he adds, was for a time the only topic, the only author, and the prevailing oath. The dedication, which is now shrunk to five lines in small type, was then spread over a whole page of great capitals: —

“To the very high and August Princess,
CATHERINE II.,
Empress of all the Russias,
Protectress of the Arts and Sciences,
Worthy by her Understanding
To judge ancient Nations,
As she is worthy to govern her own.
Offered very humbly
By the Nephew of the Author.”

This was highly gratifying to the loyal Russians; and no volume, perhaps, could be better adapted to *begin* the education of a people such as the Russians then were. The empress sent to London for an inoculator; but this volume inoculated the Russian mind, and it has been happily working in that mind ever since, making it less and less satisfied with barbaric rule.

In Prussia, and in all the northern states of Germany, the favor of Frederic gave to Voltaire a wider currency than Cath-

erine could give him in Russia. Frederic's love of Voltaire's works increased with his years; he never expressed it more warmly than in his later letters. The king wrote to him in 1770:—

“As long as the sun shall light the world, as long as the world shall preserve a tincture of science, a spark of taste, as long as there shall be spirits who love sublime thoughts, as long as there shall be ears sensible to harmony, your works will last, and your name will fill the space of the ages which lead to eternity. As for my works, people will say, ‘It is much that this king was not entirely imbecile; this or that passage is passable; if he had been born a private citizen, he might have gained his subsistence as proof-reader to a publisher,’—and then the book will be thrown down; then, candle-lighters will be made of it; then it will never be spoken of again.”

When the king thinks so, and that king is a Frederic II., the court and public of his day usually have the honor of agreeing with his majesty. And not alone the court and public. When the king wrote these words, in January, 1770, the most richly endowed young man of whom we have knowledge, the magnificent Goethe, was twenty years old; and we see, from many passages of his writings, that he even went beyond the King of Prussia in his estimate of Voltaire. In Louis XIV., Goethe once wrote, nature produced the consummate specimen of the monarchical type of man, and, in so doing, exhausted herself and broke the mould. Not that he was the best of kings, nor even a good king; but he was the king who was most a king.

“So [he adds], in Voltaire, nature produced the man most eminently endowed with all the qualities which characterize and honor his nation, and charged him to represent France to the universe. After having produced these two extraordinary men, types, one of the royal majesty, the other of the French genius, nature rested, as if to make them better appreciated, or as if exhausted by the creation of two prodigies.

“A man must possess many advantages in order that public opinion may recognize in him an incontestable superiority; it is especially in France that a public, disdainful and difficult to please, soon ceases to regard whatever is not truly extraordinary. For a man to conquer

its lasting approval, it is not too much for him to have a multitude of talents, a wide and universal comprehension, a union of qualities the most opposed to one another, and which seem the most incompatible. Nothing short of a marvel wins the admiration of a Frenchman. But nature created marvels for him, in order to condemn him to admiration. I know not if we Germans are more sensitive to literary beauties than the French, but we are certainly less avaricious of our applause; it suffices that talent gives us some pleasure to be the object of our homage; but even that which he admires the Frenchman does not love, while among us whatever is admired is loved also.

“Depth, genius, imagination, taste, reason, sensibility, philosophy, elevation, originality, nature, intellect, fancy, rectitude, facility, flexibility, precision, art, abundance, variety, fertility, warmth, magic, charm, grace, force, an eagle’s sweep of vision, vast understanding, rich instruction, excellent tone, urbanity, vivacity, delicacy, correctness, purity, cleanness, elegance, harmony, brilliancy, rapidity, gaiety, pathos, sublimity, universality, perfection, indeed, — behold Voltaire!

“Voltaire will be always regarded as the greatest man in literature of modern times, and, perhaps, even of all times; as the most astonishing creation of the Author of nature, a creation in which he pleased himself to assemble, once, in the frail and perishable organization of a man, all the varieties of talent, all the glories of genius, all the powers of thought.”¹

This is the faithful expression of Goethe’s feeling during what may be termed his French period, when, as he said to Eckermann, half a century later, Voltaire reigned over the world of literature and opinion, and when it cost him an arduous struggle to preserve his German independence against an influence so dominant. But we see in Goethe’s later writings and conversations that, to the last, the talents of Voltaire seemed to him phenomenal. His conversation with Eckermann, in 1823, upon the short personal poems of Voltaire, may serve to show this: —

“‘You are right,’ said Goethe to his affectionate secretary, ‘to give so much time to those little poems addressed to persons; they are unquestionably among the most charming of his works. There is not a line which is not full of thought, clear, bright, and graceful.’

“‘And we see,’ said I, ‘his relations to all the great and mighty of the world, and remark with pleasure the distinguished position taken by himself, inasmuch as he seems to feel himself equal to the highest;

¹ 2 Œuvres de Voltaire, 458; 97—volume ed.

and we never find that any majesty can embarrass his free mind, even for a moment.'

"'Yes,' said Goethe 'he bore himself like a man of rank. And, with all his freedom and audacity, he ever kept himself within the limits of strict propriety, which is, perhaps, saying still more. I may cite the Empress of Austria as an authority in such matters; she has repeatedly assured me that, in those poems of Voltaire's, there is no trace of crossing the line of *convenance*.'

"'Does your excellency,' said I, 'remember the short poem in which he makes to the Princess of Prussia, afterwards Queen of Sweden, a pretty declaration of love, by saying that he dreamed of being elevated to the royal dignity?'

"'It is one of his best,' said Goethe, and he recited the lines. 'How pretty that is! And never did poet have his talent so completely at command every moment as Voltaire. I remember an anecdote, when he had been for some time on a visit to Madame du Châtelet. Just as he was going away, and the carriage was standing at the door, he received a letter from a great number of young girls in a neighboring convent, who wished to play the "Death of Julius Cæsar" on the birthday of their abbess, and begged him to write them a prologue. The case was too delicate for a refusal; so Voltaire at once called for pen and paper, and wrote the desired prologue, standing, upon the mantel-piece. It is a poem of perhaps twenty lines, thoroughly digested, finished, perfectly suited to the occasion, and, in short, of the very best class.'

"'I am very desirous to read it,' said I.

"'I doubt,' said Goethe, 'whether you will find it in your collection. It has only lately come to light; and, indeed, he wrote hundreds of such poems, of which many may still be scattered about among private persons.'

"'I found, of late, a passage in Lord Byron,' said I, 'from which I perceived with delight that even Byron had an extraordinary esteem for Voltaire. We may see in his works how much he liked to read, study, and make use of Voltaire.'

"'Byron,' said Goethe, 'knew too well where anything was to be got, and was too clever not to draw from this universal source of light.'"¹

The anecdote related by Goethe of the young ladies applying for a prologue to the "Mort de Cæsar" is given by Duvernet also, who mentions other particulars. Voltaire, he says, received their letter at a moment of "extreme embarrassment."

¹ Conversations. December, 1828.

They assured him that they would all willingly be "pulverized for his glory." "*Mordieu!*" cried the irritated poet, tearing their letter to pieces; "a fine thing indeed for a parcel of girls to want to present a conspiracy of proud republicans! The sack of their convent would suit them much better." Relieved by this explosion, he regained his good humor, and added, "They are good girls, though. They are not very sensible to wish a prologue for that tragedy; but I am still less so to lose my temper for a prologue." So saying, he wrote the lines, which, since Goethe's day, have been published in his works.

The young ladies of the convent of Beaumes, it must be owned, were highly favored; he caught the tone and feeling of such compositions as completely as if he had been an old master of a Jesuit college.

But to return. If Frederic II. and Goethe had this feeling for Voltaire, we need say nothing of his influence over the German people of that generation. The reading class of Germany, as we know, were absolutely his, while their own great literature was still unforeseen; Frederic despising his native tongue; Goethe a young man; Schiller a boy; Kant unknown. One of the products of the royal porcelain works at Berlin in 1775 was a bust of Voltaire in that material. "People tear one another," wrote the king, "in the struggle for your busts at the manufactory of porcelain, where they do not turn them out fast enough to supply the demand." Frederic had already sent to Ferney a case of porcelain ware from this establishment, and the poet drank his coffee from a cup which, he declared, could not be matched either at Dresden or at Sèvres. He feigned to object to a wreath of laurel around the cover of "the prettiest bowl in the world," on the ground that it savored of ostentation in a king to place his *arms* upon the cover of a bowl.

From England, too, came to Ferney many proofs of regard and consideration, such as surprise readers not familiar with that century. The greatest of these was a translation of his collected works into English by Smollett, Franklin, and others, begun in 1762, and published in monthly five-shilling volumes, until thirty-seven volumes had appeared. Costly and laborious as this enterprise was, it seems to have been profitable,

as we still find in our older libraries copies of the second edition; where, also, we may count from forty to sixty separate publications bearing his name, and published during his life. Coleman, Garrick, Chesterfield, Baskerville, Horace Walpole, Hume, and Robertson were among his correspondents. Robertson sent him, in 1770, through Madame du Deffand, a copy of his "History of Charles V.," which Voltaire acknowledged with his usual cordiality. "His respect, his veneration for you," wrote Madame du Deffand, "are extreme." Voltaire wrote to the historian: "It belongs to you and to M. Hume to write history. You are eloquent, learned, and impartial; I join myself to Europe in esteeming you." About the same time came to him from England a copy of the medal struck in honor of circumnavigation of the earth by Admiral Anson. "The family," he wrote, "have sent me one in gold. They paid me that honor in my character of citizen of the globe which the admiral has just made the tour of."

He still liked to use his English a little. John Baskerville, the publisher and type-founder, wrote to him in 1771 for the last edition of one of his works, perhaps with a view to printing it in his superb manner. He replied in English: "I thank you earnestly for the honour you do me. I send you an exemplary by the way of Holland. I am your most obedient servant, VOLTAIRE, Gentleman of the M. C. King's Chamber." Baskerville, in return, sent him copies of his fine editions of Milton and Virgil, which he also acknowledged in English: "The old scribbler, to whom you have been so kind as to send your magnificent editions of Virgil and Milton, thanks you heartily. He will send you, as soon as possible, his poor sheets duly corrected. They stand in great need of it."

In the colonies of America, and, particularly, in Virginia and Massachusetts, Voltaire was a familiar name from an early period. The great houses of Virginia were abundantly supplied with the works, not of Voltaire only, but of all the Encyclopædists; and John Adams intimates that one half of the educated men of the world in New England agreed with them in opinion, when he was a young lawyer. There is an amusing entry in his Diary, dated *Sunday*, May 30, 1756, when he was a village school-master, a few miles from Boston. He records that he went to church that day, as usual, and

heard the minister say that sinners were in continual danger of being swept by the mighty torrent of "God's wrath" to endless perdition. But he records also, "Read part of the first volume of Voltaire's 'Age of Louis XIV.'" The young gentleman allowed himself much latitude in his Sunday readings, for he speaks of reading on Sundays Ovid's "Art of Love" to Mrs. Savil, the wife of the village doctor.

In France, Voltaire reigned without a competitor; not in the polite world merely, but over the intelligence and patriotism of the nation. A hundred proofs could be given of his peculiar and intense popularity, as well as of the extent of his influence. Few compliments that he received in his life pleased him so much as the naming of a fine ship *The Voltaire*, by some merchants of Nantes; an honor which he acknowledged by a poem of seventy lines, "To My Ship," of singular grace and spirit, in his best Horatian manner. He tells his ship, among other things, where not to go: not to Naples, where the people make more of the blood of St. Januarius than of the ashes of Virgil; not to the Tiber, where there are no longer talents, heroes, great men, — "no longer a Rome, but only a Pope." His letter, also, to the chief owner of the vessel was highly amusing. Never before, he said, had a mere maker of verse and prose received such an honor; all such having been reserved hitherto for Neptune, the Tritons, the Sirens, ministers of state, or saints, "which last have always arrived at a good harbor." In the war of 1741, he added, the English captured a Spanish ship laden with papal bulls, crucifixes, and indulgences. "I flatter myself that your ship will not carry such merchandise; which procures, indeed, a very great fortune in the next world, but other sorts of cargo are necessary for this."

Piron was still alive, though approaching his eightieth year. He launched a couplet on this occasion, which many diarists copied: —

"Si j'avais un vaisseau qui se nommât Voltaire,
Sous cet auspice heureux j'en ferais un corsaire."¹

The society of Paris was attentive to what passed at Ferney, as also to what came from that retreat. It was a wonderfully

¹ If I had a ship which was named Voltaire, under that happy omen I should make it a corsair.

light, bright, gay society, the recollection of which used to make Talleyrand say, in his old age, that one who had not lived in it could not know how delicious it was possible for human existence to be. What pretty ideas they had of entertaining one another, so superior to the crude, four-bottle debauchery that prevailed on the other side of the channel! Madame de Genlis, not yet a pattern governess, mentions one:

“M. d’Albaret had been several times at Ferney, and imitated M. de Voltaire to perfection. It was agreed that we should play ‘The Suppers of Madame du Bocage,’ and that we should suppose M. de Voltaire to be at Paris. M. d’Albaret played Voltaire, M. de Genlis the Chevalier de Barbantane, and four or five others represented other wits. I wore the costume of a woman sixty years of age, and, after the lessons of M. d’Albaret, I played with great success Madame du Bocage; speaking of my journey to Italy, while they spoke to me of my ‘Columbiade’ and of my former beauty. Afterwards, the attention of every one was directed to M. de Voltaire, who was exhibited in the most delightful way possible, and without any exaggeration. He told stories and recited verses, among which were many impromptus made in my praise; that is, in praise of Madame du Bocage. We had in this way five ‘Suppers of Madame du Bocage,’ without ever getting tired of that pleasantry. M. d’Albaret was an imitable Voltaire. We engaged to keep the secret, and it was kept so faithfully that our play was never spoken of in society.”¹

Such airy lightness easily becomes frivolity, and “all Paris,” as it seems, could readily enter into a passing jest. Charles André, a Paris wig-maker, flattered by some of his customers that he had a genius for poetry, wrote a tragedy, entitled “The Lisbon Earthquake,” a mass of absurdities, which he offered to the company of the Théâtre-Français. The actors amused themselves by affecting to listen attentively to the reading, and declared that they were prevented from accepting the play only by the great expense and danger attending the production of an earthquake. The barber printed his tragedy, and dedicated it to “the illustrious and celebrated poet, M. de Voltaire,” whom he called his dear *confrère*. He sold the piece in his own shop, and there arose such a rage to possess it that fifty carriages a day stopped before his door, filled with fashionable people who desired copies. The author sent his

¹ Memoirs of Madame de Genlis, volume i. page 296. Paris, 1825.

piece to Voltaire, who addressed him a letter of four pages, containing four words a hundred times repeated:—

“Monsieur André, make wigs; Monsieur André, make wigs; Monsieur André, make wigs; wigs, always wigs, and never anything but wigs.”

There is an anecdote of one of his lake rides between Lausanne and Ferney, which shows the passion of sentiment which his name could sometimes excite during his later years. He alighted at the inn of the little village of Colonges, near Lausanne, one day, about 1771; where, also, a pedestrian artist stopped for dinner. The painter had neither brush nor palette with him, but, inspired by the sight of the great man, drew with charcoal upon the front of the fire-place a full-length portrait of him, which proved to be a striking likeness. Some time after, a party of young roysterers, not knowing who this odd figure was, with its large peruke and fur cap, were about to make it still more grotesque by some additions. “Already,” as the story goes, “they had laid hands upon that venerable head, when the landlady saw them, and cried out, ‘*It is Voltaire!*’” Struck with a religious respect, they refrained, and one of them took post, flew to Geneva, and brought back a glazier, who put the portrait in safety against such an insult.” Four lines were afterwards written under it:—

“Mon œil le reconnaît, c’est lui-même, c’est lui
 Qui de la vérité fut le plus ferme appui!
 O toi, qui dans ces lieux viens mettre pied à terre,
 Trop heureux, ne pars pas sans contempler Voltaire!”¹

This charcoal portrait was seen in the inn of Colonges in 1777 by the editor of the Wagnière and Longchamp Memoirs, who gives the anecdote.²

It was, however, in the circle of “the brethren” at Paris, the Encyclopædists, the authors who had been kindled, formed, and defended by Voltaire, that he was most tenderly cherished. This was, indeed, but a just return for the amazing devotion and faultless tact with which, on all occasions, he took their part. He made common cause with them at all times and in all ways. If Diderot or Marmontel were candidates for the

¹ My eye recognizes him; it is himself; it is he who was truth’s firmest support! O thou, who in this place puts foot to earth, too fortunate, go not away without looking upon Voltaire!

² Volume ii, page 42.

Academy, he exerted himself on their behalf with the whole force of his talents, but, particularly, with his greatest talent, that of persistence. For months, when Diderot was a candidate, the burden of his letters to Paris was, Let him enter; let him enter. "Compel them to come in." "Take the kingdom of heaven by violence." "If it is impossible, it must still be attempted." And when the Sorbonne published their *indivulsi*, or little index, containing thirty-seven errors found in Marmontel's "Belisaire," he seemed to frustrate and annul the proceeding by simply appending the word *ridiculous*.

With what generous warmth he applauded their exertions in the sacred cause of crushing *l'Infâme!* The Abbé Morellet, during his stay in Rome, obtained access, by chance, to an immense folio volume of the fourteenth century, in manuscript, containing the whole procedure of the Inquisition, drawn up by the head of the institution for the guidance of the Inquisitors of every country in Christendom. Struck with horror at its hideous revelations, he copied many passages, summarized others, and drew up his "Manual of the Inquisition," in French; giving the procedure, in order, from the first information to the final execution of the victims at the stake. Never was anything published more profoundly horrible. "One lady of my acquaintance," the abbé reports, "could read it only half through, and had to relieve her mind by holding the book on the live coals with the tongs, as if she had been grilling an Inquisitor." Voltaire gave the young abbé the heartiest applause. "Have I read the lovely jurisprudence of the Inquisition? Ah, yes, *mort-dieu!* I have read it, and it made upon me the impression which the body of Cæsar made upon the Romans."

The most notable thing said of this Manual was the remark of M. de Malesherbes, the minister who permitted its publication. "You believe, perhaps," said he to Morellet, in handing him back his manuscript, "that you have gathered here extraordinary facts, procedures unheard of. *Eh bien*, know that this system of jurisprudence of Nicolas Eymeric [Grand Inquisitor], and of his Inquisition, is substantially *our* jurisprudence." The young abbé was astonished and incredulous; but he found it so, and so it remained until the Revolution.

"Every time [wrote Voltaire to Saurin] one of the brethren grat-

ifies the public with some good work which is applauded, I throw myself on my knees in my little oratory. I thank God, and I cry out, O God of good spirits, God of just spirits, God of amiable spirits, extend thy mercy to all our brethren! Continue to confound the fools, the hypocrites, and the fanatics! The more good works our brothers produce, the more the glory of thy holy name will be spread abroad. Give success always to the wise, and cause the impertinent to be hissed. May I see, before I die, thy faithful servant Helvetius and thy faithful servant Saurin in the number of the Forty. Such are the most ardent vows of the monk Voltairius, who from the bottom of his cell joins himself to the communion of the brethren, salutes them, and blesses them in the spirit of an indissoluble concord. He flatters himself, above all, that the venerable brother Helvetius will gather together as much as he can the dispersed faithful; will save them from the venom of the basilisk, and from the biting of the scorpion, and from the teeth of the Frérons and the Palissots. He recommends, also, to the combatants of the Lord the fanatic persecutors, whom it is necessary to devote to public execration."

And, again, in 1764, to a young nobleman, more zealous than prudent: —

"I conjure you not to dispute with hot-headed people: contradiction irritates them always, instead of enlightening them; they fly into a passion; they hate those whose opinions are cited. Controversy never convinced any man; men can be influenced by making them think for themselves, by seeming to doubt with them, by leading them as if by the hand, without their perceiving it. A good book lent to them, which they read at leisure, produces upon them surer effects, because they do not then blush to be subjugated by the superior reason of an antagonist. . . . We are in this world only to do good in it."

In a similar strain to his favorite disciple, Damilaville: —

"I confess to you, my dear brother, that I sacrifice every small resentment, all private interest, to this great interest of truth. It is necessary to overwhelm a hydra which has launched its venom upon so many men respectable by their manners and by their knowledge. Your friends, and, above all, your principal friend [Diderot], ought to regard this enterprise as their first duty; not for the sake of avenging past wounds, but to secure themselves against future wounds, to put all honest men in safety, and, in one word, to render service to the human race."

Thus rousing, inciting, applauding the little band of the

faithful, inviting them oft, entertaining them long, defending them always, he grew into their affections, and, in 1770, they conceived the project of giving him a signal mark of their regard. They were accustomed then to meet every Friday evening at the house of the Swiss banker, Jacques Necker, who had married in 1764 a learned Swiss governess, daughter of a Protestant pastor. Already, in 1770, their gifted child, to be known by and by as Madame de Staël, was four years of age, and beginning to listen to the conversation of her mother's distinguished circle. At Madame Necker's, one evening in 1770, the scheme was started of a statue of Voltaire, to be executed by a great artist, to be paid for by subscription, and to be set up in some public place. The project was accepted with enthusiasm by the whole of the company of seventeen persons, and Madame Necker undertook the task of proposing it to Voltaire. Pigalle, the most famous sculptor of the day, was at once thought of to do the work. The subscriptions were to be not less in amount than two louis d'or, nor more than twenty; and, in fact, when the Duke of Richelieu sent fifty louis, he was besought not to shame by such munificence the modest contributions which alone could be offered by men of letters, and he consented to give but twenty. Voltaire replied to Madame Necker in his own manner, May 11, 1770: —

“My just modesty, madame, and my reason made me think, at first, that the idea of a statue was a good jest; but, since the thing is serious, suffer me to speak to you seriously.

“I am seventy-six years old, and I have scarcely recovered from a severe malady which treated my body and my soul very badly for six weeks. M. Pigalle, it is said, is to come and model my countenance. But, madame, it would be necessary that I should have a countenance, and the place where it was can hardly be divined. My eyes are sunk three inches; my cheeks are of old parchment, badly stuck upon bones that hold to nothing; the few teeth I had are gone. What I say to you is not coquetry; it is the pure truth. A poor man has never been sculptured in that condition; M. Pigalle would believe that he was played with; and, for my part, I have so much self-love that I should never dare to appear in his presence. I would advise him, if he wishes to put an end to this strange affair, to take his model, with slight alterations, from the little figure in Sèvres porcelain. After all, what does it matter to posterity whether a block of marble resem-

bles this man or another? I keep myself very philosophical upon this matter. But as I am still more grateful than philosophical, I give you the same power over what remains of my body as you have over what remains of my soul. Both are very much out of order; but my heart is yours, madame, as if I were but twenty-five, and the whole with very sincere respect. My obeisance, I pray you, to M. Necker."

Upon reflection, he was more reconciled to the scheme, and ended by entering into it warmly, regarding it, as he wrote to D'Alembert a month later, "as a sound box on the ear which you are giving to fanaticism and to the base minions of that monster," and as "a testimonial of friendship to your old reprobate [*enfant perdu*], to the foe of tyrants, Pompignans, and Frérons." He added, "Under this marble you crush superstition, which was again lifting its head."

The subscriptions flowed in, until they amounted to nearly nineteen thousand francs; for it was found impossible to exclude many powerful friends of Voltaire who had not written a book. All his monarchs except the Pope appear to have subscribed, and Frederick of Prussia accompanied his subscription with a burst of eulogium, as if desirous to make amends at last to his prisoner of Frankfort, in the face of Europe. It was D'Alembert who called his attention to the scheme. "The finest monument to Voltaire," replied the king, "is the one he has erected to himself, — his works, — which will endure longer than the Basilisk of St. Peter, the Louvre, and all the buildings which human vanity has dedicated to eternity. When French shall no longer be spoken, Voltaire will be translated into the language that shall succeed the French. . . . You have only to inform me of what is required of me." D'Alembert replied, "A crown-piece, sire, and your name." He told the king, also, that he had read his noble eulogium to the French Academy, who were so much pleased with it that they had ordered it to be inscribed at length upon their records. In acknowledgment, Voltaire congratulated the king, cultivator of all the other arts and sciences, that now he was willing to encourage anatomy also, by subscribing for a skeleton.

Rousseau, Fréron, Palissot, and La Beaumelle contributed, but the circle at Madame Necker's returned the money of all of them but Rousseau, and found it difficult to persuade Vol-

taire not to return his, also. Rousseau's letter, inclosing his two louis d'or, was thought very happy in its omissions; it was addressed to the secretary of the Academy of Sciences: "I learn, sir, that a plan has been formed to erect a statue to M. de Voltaire, and that all who are known to the world by some printed work are permitted to be subscribers to it. I have paid dearly enough for this honor to be in full right to claim it, and I request the favor of you to exert your good offices to get my name enrolled among the list of subscribers." It required all D'Alembert's influence with his chief to overcome his aversion to the acceptance of this offering.

In a month, M. Pigalle was at Ferney, engaged in the work assigned him. He found it one of the most difficult of tasks to model so anatomical a subject with hands accustomed to the rounded outlines of Venus and the Graces. Baron Grimm, who heard the artist's adventures at Ferney related by himself, gives a ludicrous account of the same: —

"Phidias-Pigalle has made his journey to Ferney, and returned, after having passed eight days there. The evening before his departure he had yet done nothing, and had made up his mind to renounce the enterprise, and to come back and declare that he could not do it. The patriarch accorded him a sitting every day: but during the sitting he was like a child, unable to keep still a moment. Most of the time he had his secretary beside him, to whom he dictated letters while the artist modeled him; and, in accordance with a habit which is familiar to him in dictating, he kept blowing peas, or making other grimaces fatal to the purposes of the sculptor. The artist was in despair, and saw no other course open to him but to return, or to fall into a violent fever at Ferney. At length, on the last day, the conversation turned, happily for the project, upon Aaron's golden calf. The patriarch was so well pleased at Pigalle's declaring that the casting of such a statue would require at least six months that, during the rest of the sitting, the artist did whatever he liked with him, and succeeded in making a model to his mind. He was so afraid of spoiling what he had done, in a second sitting, that he had the mould made immediately by his assistant, and set out very early the next morning, without seeing any one."¹

Baron Grimm was probably right in assigning M. Pigalle's success to the golden calf of Aaron. A few days after the sculptor's departure, Voltaire wrote to the Count of Schon-

¹ Correspondance Littéraire, volume vii. page 23.

berg: "I conversed much with Pigalle upon the calf of gold which was cast in one night by the high priest Aaron. He swore to me that he could not make such a figure in less than six months; from which I piously concluded that God wrought a miracle to erect the golden calf in a single night, and to have the pleasure of punishing with death the twenty-three thousand Jews who murmured at his being too long in writing his two tables." In the article "Fonte" [casting] of the "Philosophical Dictionary," he gives in great detail the process of casting a statue in metal; repeating, doubtless, the information derived on this occasion from Pigalle. It is one of the most amusing articles of the whole work, as well as one of the most effective for the author's purpose. In the course of it, he said, "I asked, a long time ago, the Phidias of France, M. Pigalle, how long it would take him to make a horse [in bronze] three feet high. He answered me in writing: 'I require six months, at least.' I have his declaration, dated June 3, 1770."

The statue disappointed the generation that saw it first, and gratifies only the curiosity of the generation that sees it now; for it is the naked figure, seated, of a very meagre old man. Fréron said of it that it was not important "posterity should count the ribs of M. de Voltaire." Posterity, which sees it at present in the library of the Institute at Paris, can count those ribs if it pleases, and, upon the whole, is not ill-pleased to see the veritable likeness of the man. The head and the carriage of the head convey an idea of the power that dwelt within him, and extort the admiration of students. Some connoisseurs have found the work impressive and commanding in a high degree. For his own part, though he would have preferred showing himself dressed to posterity, he deferred to the artist's trained judgment. "Naked or clothed," he wrote, "all's one to me. I shall not inspire any ideas *mal-honnêtes* in the ladies, however I may be presented to them. M. Pigalle must be left absolute master of his statue. In a matter belonging to the fine arts, it is a crime to put shackles upon genius."

The statue did not escape the epigrams which then tempered despotism of all kinds. One ended thus: "'It is a monster!'" cried a certain scribbler, on seeing it. 'If it is a monster,' said another, 'it is certainly *he!*'" Another wound

up with a pleasant line: "If he had not written, he had assassinated." The caricaturists, also, seized the chance, and represented Religion calling down the thunder-bolts upon the statue, to the great joy of a group of priests. But another artist parodied this work by representing Imagination handing to the statue the torch of Genius, to the biting regret of Envy and Stupidity wallowing in the mire at its feet.

The importance of an author is to be measured finally by the influence he exerts. A hundred indications in the records of that period show that Voltaire had made a conquest of its educated intellect. "Good company" was on his side to such a degree, as Madame du Deffand frequently remarks, that belief in the Christian miracles was as extinct as belief in the Greek mythology. Dr. Priestley, who was in Paris in 1774, reports, "*All the philosophical persons to whom I was introduced were unbelievers in Christianity, and even professed atheists.*" His range of acquaintance could not have been very extensive, or he would have met a large number of unbelievers who were not atheists. The scenes which the Abbé Morellet describes as occurring at the dinners given to the philosophers twice a week by Baron d'Holbach show that the deists sometimes held their own against the more positive and aggressive atheists. The influence of Voltaire appeared in the tolerance and good humor that prevailed in both parties; and, chiefly, in the fact that such topics were frequently discussed in such circles. It was he who had lifted the mind of the generation to the height of choosing subjects of that nature, and of considering them without passion, prejudice, or fear. At Baron d'Holbach's Sunday and Thursday dinners the abbé had met Dr. Priestley, as well as Franklin, Garrick, Hume, Wilkes, Barré, and other Englishmen. Dr. Priestley lost much in not being present on occasions described by Morellet, when he would have discovered that there were some philosophers still in France who were not atheists.

The worthy abbé dwells much upon the excellent temper with which these high subjects were discussed. It was owing in a great degree to their having been "taken out of" religion, with which, indeed, they have no more to do than questions of chemistry. He mentions that all the company were secretly convinced for many years that the Baron d'Holbach was the

author of the "Système de la Nature," but never imparted the conviction, even to one another, for fear of compromising their host. The baron was at once the most unswerving foe of supernaturalism and the most genial and generous friend of man whom Paris then held. If Dr. Priestley, as is probable, sat next to the head of the table, as the honored guest, he may well have derived the impression which he records in his diary: the baron himself being atheist enough for a large city.

In the very fashions of the day the influence of Voltaire was manifest. Forty years had passed since he had revealed free England to France, — England, tolerant of opinion, to France, tolerant of all else. And, since the peace of 1763, he had embraced many opportunities of contrasting, in his humorous, bantering manner, the efficiency of the methods of freedom with the inefficiency of government by mistresses and caprice. Every visitor to France after 1768, who had seen France before the Seven Years' War, was struck with the change that had come over the aspect of things. England, her language, customs, clothes, vehicles, literature, — all were in the greatest fashion. Franklin descants upon it. Count Lauragais, writing from the French court to an English lady in 1768, mentions some of the most obvious particulars: —

"Our delicate ladies, who never ventured to stir out in the morning, run all over Paris, and in the public walks, in the genteel and loose dress of milkmaids. Our carriages are neat, plain, and convenient. Horse-races are frequent in the isle of France; our stables are full of English hunters and grooms; and our whips, saddles, and boots are manufactured by your countrymen, who have reduced ours to beggary. We have substituted paper for the tapestries of the Gobelins, and introduced in our kitchens roast-beef and pudding, in lieu of our soups, ragouts, and fricasee. We hunt, swear, drink toasts, and determine all disputes by wagers, like your nobility and gentry. Our girls, who were never allowed to pay or receive visits without a mother or an aunt, and were shut up in a nunnery, till they were often forced to marry a man whom they detested to acquire the privilege of having an intrigue with a fop of their own choice, resort to all places of diversion, without control or restraint."

These were trifles. It was the freedom of thinking which prevailed in the educated circles of France that marked the age, and it was noticeable in subjects which Voltaire and his friends had tacitly agreed not to disturb. In many ways, he had intimated to those who kept the key of the Bastille a willingness to support the royal authority, provided he could aim his shafts unmolested at the sacerdotal. Nevertheless, as both rested upon a similar basis of fiction, and were strong through the imaginations of men, neither could be successfully assailed without weakening the other. The kings already felt that they were on trial. "As long as I live," said Louis XV. at this time, "I shall be able to have my way; but I pity my grandson." "After us, the deluge!" said Pompadour. And Frederic of Prussia, in sending his subscription for the statue of Voltaire, wrote to D'Alembert, "It is a kind of consolation to me that these so much vilified kings may be of some use to philosophers. They are at least good for something."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

VISITORS AT FERNEY.

SUCH celebrity as Voltaire's would have drawn travelers to remote and unfrequented scenes. The growing taste for the picturesque and the increasing wealth of the leading nations brought every summer more and more visitors to Switzerland, and those visitors were chiefly of the class susceptible, at least, to the spell of a great reputation. There was no inn at Ferney then, nor any nearer than Geneva, and, in consequence, it was almost a matter of course to invite callers to dinner; often it was a kind of necessity to ask them to stay all night; and, frequently, a guest who had come only "to present his homage" found it impossible to refuse an invitation to remain. Hence Voltaire's remark that he had been for fourteen years the innkeeper of Europe. There were indeed times when the château was overwhelmed with an inundation of visitors; at other times there would be a guest or party who could not perceive that they had stayed too long. The Abbé Coyer, on arriving, frankly announced his intention to remain six weeks, or, as some versions of the story have it, to spend three months every year at Ferney. The master parried him by a conundrum. "Why, my dear abbé," said he, "are you unlike Don Quixote? He took the inns for châteaux, and you take the châteaux for inns." The abbé is said to have departed early the next morning.

It was with reference to the oppressive multitude of his visitors that Voltaire used to utter a sentence which has since become the common property of man: "I pray God to deliver me from my friends; as to my enemies, I charge myself with them."¹

On many occasions he practiced the device of pretending to be at death's door. He sent word one day, to a strange vis-

¹ Reported by Duvernet, page 393. Paris, 1797.

itor, that he was sick. The next day the stranger called again, and Voltaire ordered him to be informed that he was dying. "And if," he added, "the persistent fellow comes again, tell him that I am dead, and even buried."¹ But such stringent messages as this did not always suffice. The pastor Gaberel relates (from Genevan tradition) that, in reply to another stranger who asked to see him, he sent the usual response, "Not at home." "But I hear his voice!" cried the visitor. "Tell him, then, that I am sick," rejoined the master of the house. "I shall feel his pulse; I am of the trade," said the intruder. "Say that I am dead," continued Voltaire. "I will bury him," said the visitor; "it will not be the first, for I am a doctor." "This is a very obstinate man; let him enter." The stranger appeared. "Well, sir," said Voltaire, "you take me, then, for a curious beast." "Yes, monsieur, for the phoenix." "Very well; know, then, that it costs twelve sous to see me." "Here are twenty-four," said the stranger, "and I will come back to-morrow." Voltaire was disarmed, and he bestowed upon the visitor his politest attentions.

Wagnière informs us that nothing was so sure or so quick to soften him toward an intruder as a happy stroke of wit. A gentleman, who, it appears, had some claims to regard, chanced to arrive at an inopportune time, and passed three days at the château without being admitted to its master's presence. As he was leaving, he sent in a stanza expressive of his disappointment: "I came here to see the genius of the place, to hear him, to speak to him, and to be instructed on every point; but, like Jesus in his eucharist, he is eaten, drunken, and never seen." The guest was immediately sent for, joyously welcomed, and retained several days.² Both Wagnière and Duvernet report this incident. The stanza was:—

"Je comptais en ces lieux voir le dieu du génie,
L'entendre, lui parler, et m'instruire en tout point;
Mais c'est comme Jésus en son eucharistie,
On le mange, on le boit, et l'on ne le voit point."

In spite of all precautions, strange creatures occasionally made their way to his presence, and he displayed his usual ingenuity in eluding their lumbering adulation. Among many

¹ Duvernet, page 417. Paris, 1797.

² Duvernet, page 416. Paris, 1797.

such anecdotes, those of the pastor Gaberel may have the merit of containing an ingredient of truth. "Monseigneur," said one worshiper, "when I see you, I see the great candle which lights the universe." "Madame Denis," replied the poet, in an animated manner, "go quick and get a pair of snuffers." A lady once interrupted him to say, "Ah, monsieur, you have labored well for posterity." "Yes, madame," he replied, "I have planted four thousand feet of trees in my park." A native of the neighboring canton of Berne addressed him thus: "Monsieur de Voltaire, they say that you write against the good God. That is bad; but I hope he will forgive you. They say, too, that you jabber against religion. That is very bad also. Against our Lord Jesus Christ himself, too. That is also bad; but I hope, nevertheless, that he will pardon you, in his great mercy. But, Monsieur de Voltaire, beware of writing against Their Excellencies of Bern, our sovereign lords, for, you may rely upon it, Their Excellencies would never forgive you!"

The polite families of Geneva, as pastor Gaberel assures us, were very scrupulous as to the persons they introduced at the château. A Hungarian lord, a man of very limited mind, tormented his acquaintances in Geneva to obtain the favor of a presentation. In order to relieve their relations from his importunities, some young men undertook to satisfy him without troubling Voltaire. They conveyed him one evening to the country in a close carriage, and, on arriving at a house, they were received by two lackeys in Voltaire's livery. The stranger, being introduced into a drawing-room very dimly lighted, discovered upon a sofa an old man wrapped in a dressing-gown, his face hidden by an immense wig. With a hollow cough and speaking low, he received the stranger very politely, made him relate his travels, and told him some gay anecdotes. The magyar asked if the papers upon the table were not some new masterpiece. "Far from it," quavered the old man in the peruke. "It is but a feeble child of my old age, a tragedy." "May I ask the title of it?" "Oh," said the old man, "my tragedy is upon a subject dear to the children of Geneva, the History of the famous Empro Giriaud. The principal characters are his not less celebrated companions, Carrain, Carreau, Dupuis, Simon,"¹ etc. Then he declaimed

¹ Names belonging to a game familiar to the boys of Geneva.

some verses of the new masterpiece. The visit having ended, the enthusiastic Hungarian placed a large reward in the hands of the lackeys and friends of the pseudo-Voltaire. The joke was kept up at the expense of the magyar; for with his own money his perfidious friends gave him a supper, at which, before a numerous company, they made him relate his adventure in all its details. When Voltaire learned this pleasantry, he wished to see his other self in costume, and said to him, "I would willingly share my glory with you if you would charge yourself with half my admirers."

On the other hand, when he expected visitors who had claims upon his attention, he welcomed them with the punctilious courtesy of the period. He dressed himself with care, received them at the door of his château, and with ingenious tact anticipated and prevented their eulogium by speaking to them of their own family and affairs. A nobleman said to Duvernet, "All the time I was with him he talked to me of my ancestors, relating many interesting anecdotes which exhibited them in a brilliant light, most of which were unknown to me. But what struck me most was that, notwithstanding his great age, he animated all that he said by the bright expression of his eyes and his air of mingled gayety and politeness."

Every few months during the last fifteen or twenty years of his life, there would go the round of the gazettes an "Extract from a Letter from Ferney," in which some one of the crowd of visitors gave an account of his intercourse with the "patriarch of literature." A considerable volume of such "interviews" could be gathered, most of which contain some gleams of the man, and all are in some particulars erroneous or exaggerated. Thus, for example: "They pretend that Voltaire never goes out for a walk without the Bible, alleging that when one has a lawsuit on his hands it is necessary to study the *factums* of his adversary." He did not take a Bible with him when he walked; but he did once, in a gay moment, make a remark similar to the one attributed to him concerning the *factums*. One "Extract" of 1768 ends with an anecdote of rare quality:—

"Have no uneasiness [wrote this anonymous interviewer] with regard to the health of M. de Voltaire. That great man, accustomed

to say that he is dying for fifty years, is marvelously well. He complains of being deaf and blind. The fact is that he still reads without spectacles, and hears remarkably well. He is dry and alert; a little bent, also. On the day when I had the honor of seeing him, he wore large shoes, white stockings *roulés*, a small peruke, linen sleeves which covered all his hands, and a Persian dressing-gown. He made us many excuses for not being dressed; but he is never otherwise. He came late to dinner. A large arm-chair had been reserved for him, in which this illustrious old man sat, eating freely of vegetables, pastry, fruits, and other things. He sparkled with wit. He could be reproached with being too emphatic, and for not having in conversation that knightly tone which so well characterizes the style of his writings. After dinner he took us to his library, which is very large, very numerous, and very fine. He read us some passages from rare books upon religion; that is, against religion, for that is at present his mania. He recurs without ceasing to that subject. He played at chess with Father Adam, who, without being the first man in the world, is Jesuit enough to let himself be beaten; M. de Voltaire would never forgive his winning. Afterwards, little games were played, and then we began to tell stories of robbers. Every lady having told her tale, M. de Voltaire was urged to take his turn. He began thus: 'Ladies, once upon a time there was a farmer-general. By my faith, I have forgotten the rest.' We left him after this epigram, which was surely the best he had made that day."

The author of this letter was mistaken upon one point: Father Adam was the last man in the world to let himself be beaten at chess. La Harpe, who spent a whole year in Ferney, on filial terms with the master of the château, writes thus: "I saw them play chess every day for a year; and not only did Father Adam not show any complaisance, though in all other things he was more than complaisant, but I can attest that he often played with ill-temper, especially when he lost, and that he was very far from losing on purpose. On the contrary, I have never seen Voltaire in ill-humor over this game, and I played often with him. He even put much gayety into his play, and one of his familiar tricks was to tell stories to distract the attention of his antagonist when he was in a bad position. He was extremely fond of chess, and reproached himself for losing so much time at the game, as he valued his time for the use which he knew how to make of it. 'To spend two hours,' he would say, 'in moving little pieces of wood! A scene could be written in that time.'"

An "Extract" of the following year, 1769, returns to the health of the master, and to his complaints of being deaf, blind, and lame: "I let him complain, and, to put him to the test, in a walk which we took together in the garden, I gradually lowered my voice to the humble tone with which we speak to ministers, to people whom we respect the most. I reassured myself as to his ears. Then, after the compliments which I made him upon the beauty of his garden and the flowers, he began to swear about his gardener, protesting he took no care of them, and, while swearing, he snatched up from time to time some very fine weeds, far apart, from under the leaves of his tulips, which I had all the trouble in the world to see without bending. I concluded thence that his eyes were still very good; and from the ease with which he stooped and rose again I inferred that his joints were very flexible."

He was, in truth, at times wonderfully alert, for his age. Another anonymous visitor of about the same time gives an instance: "Methinks I see him now, with his whip in his hand, calling the whole house to go hunting: *To the chase! to the chase!* And when he had assembled everybody it was only to have them walk round his house and brush down the spiders and their webs, which the servants had neglected, among the pillars of each portico of the château."

Another letter gives this incident: "A servant, with whom he was in a passion, cried out as he ran away, 'Monsieur, you must have the devil in you!' Voltaire replied, in his most amiable manner, 'Ah, my friend, I have something worse than the devil; for I have in my head an abominable tyrant, whom I wish to stab, to prevent his treating very badly a worthy princess. I cannot succeed in doing it, and that is what puts me in a fury.'"

There are many similar anecdotes of his extreme absorption in the affairs of the drama. The following appears in several varying versions: Cramer, his Genevan publisher, was one of the dramatic company of the château, — a man of handsome proportions, who looked every inch a king upon the little stage. As he was finishing a part at rehearsal, one day, Voltaire cried out, "Cramer, you lived like a prince during the other four acts, but in the fifth you die like a bookseller!" Dr. Tronchin remonstrated, and asked him how he could ex-

pect to have gentlemen incur the expense of dresses and the labor of learning such long parts, if he scolded them so severely. Voltaire replied, "I pray you, doctor, when you have any kings to kill, kill them your own way, but let me kill mine as I please."

Most of his domestics were liable to be impressed into the service. His coachman did not come upon the stage in time, one evening, to lay him down properly at the moment of his death, which led to much inconvenience. The dead man rose, and asked the coachman to write him a receipt in full; "for, I am sure," said he, "I must be in your debt, or you would not have let me die thus like a beggar." This calls to mind his famous reply to the Duke de Villars, who was much concerned in the Tournay theatre. One day, reports Wagnière, after a presentation of the "Orphan of China" at Tournay, when the Duke de Villars had played the part of Gengis-kan, the duke asked the author how he thought he had played. Voltaire replied, with polite vivacity, "Monseigneur, you played like a duke and peer."

His delight in the drama was such that he still hailed with rapture the promise of excellence in a young dramatist; from early manhood to extreme old age, he continued his quest for the poet who should sustain the glory of the French theatre. No visitor was so sure of a welcome as a promising young author with a play in his portmanteau. The case of the poet Chabanon is in point. He had sent various literary trifles to Ferney, he tells us in his *Mémoires*, which the master politely acknowledged, and, in 1766, he presented himself at the château, without other introduction. Voltaire not only gave him a cordial welcome, but detained him many months, during which the young author was a member of the family and a sharer of all its pleasures. The patriarch was indeed enchanted with his candid, enthusiastic guest, though his dramatic gift finally proved to be inadequate. Chabanon, however, was a man of more than one talent: musician, poet, philosopher, and wit. He brought a tragedy with him, which he submitted to the lord of the château, who criticised it, as Chabanon remarked, sincerely always, if sometimes a little too severely.

"You can scarcely imagine," he says, "the ecstasy it gave

Voltaire when he had transmitted to another his own devouring ardor for study. On this subject I have heard him say a hundred times, ‘*I love to debauch youth!*’ When an inmate of his house communicated to him some new production, he would cry out, ‘Bravo, bravo, our little Ferney!’ If we met one another in his park, both dreaming, he would say to me, ‘Ah! are you taking a walk with *the fool of the house?*’ It was the imagination that he called by this name. After he had given me some advice relative to my piece, his last word usually was, ‘*Simmer that down, simmer that down!*’ In his society, the coldest head would become a thinking and active one.”

To this most pleasing reminiscence Chabanon added other particulars of much interest.

“During the seven months [he says] which I passed that year at Ferney, we did not cease to play tragedy before Voltaire, desiring to amuse his leisure moments by a spectacle of his glory. The first piece we gave was ‘*Les Scythes*,’ which he had just finished. He played a part in it himself. I was not able to judge of his talent as an actor, because my own part put me always upon the stage with him. I should have feared to lose my hold upon my character if I had regarded him in the spirit of observation. At one of our rehearsals only I permitted myself to hear and judge the first speech he had to deliver. I felt myself powerfully moved by his declamation, emphatic and cadenced as it was. That kind of art was natural to him. In declaiming, he was both poet and actor: he made the spectator feel at once the harmony of the verses and the interest of the situation. The first requisite of the comedian he had: he felt vividly, and therefore he produced much effect.

“‘*The Scythians*’ had little success at Ferney, and the author perceived it. This truth was conveyed to him, as every truth must be imparted to kings, with circumlocutions which softened its bitterness without disguising the disagreeable fact. ‘*Adélaïde*’ was asked for, when Voltaire wished to give ‘*The Scythians*’ again. On this occasion it was that he said to Madame Denis, ‘I know not why they love that “*Adélaïde*” so much.’

“Our representations were a kind of solemnity, to which people came eagerly from Geneva, from Switzerland, and from Savoy. All the places in the neighborhood were occupied with French regiments, the officers of which flocked to our theatre. Our costumes were suitable, magnificent, in harmony with the piece we played. The theatre

was pretty. The stage was provided with changeable scenes, and capable of exhibiting the splendors and prodigies of 'Sémiramis.' One day some grenadiers of the regiment of Conti served as guards upon the stage. Voltaire ordered that a supper should be prepared for them as usual, and that whatever compensation they asked should be given them. One of them replied, 'We will accept nothing. We have seen M. de Voltaire; that is our payment.' Voltaire heard this reply. He was delighted with it. 'Oh my brave grenadiers!' he cried, with transport. 'Oh my brave grenadiers!' He invited them to come and take a meal at the château as often as they pleased, and said they should be employed profitably for themselves, if they wished to labor.

"The course of events, in fact, had made the château the headquarters of the little army which may be said to have invested Geneva. The colonel of the regiment of Conti lived in the château, and three companies were quartered in the village. So far from complaining of this as an intrusion, the lord of Ferney was enchanted to lodge the soldiers of the king, and many of them, it appears, accepted his invitation to labor. 'The soldiers,' he wrote to a friend at the time, 'are making roads for me, and the grenadiers are planting trees.' With regard to fire, there are people who pretend that Geneva will be in flames this winter. I believe nothing of it; but if they attempt to burn Ferney and Tournay, the regiment of Conti and the Flanders legion, who occupy my poor villages, will gayly come to my defense.'"

There was something very remarkable in the patience and docility with which a person so irritable submitted to the arrogance of younger men to whom he was attached, or in whom he discerned promising ability. Few young authors ever appeared more self-sufficient than La Harpe, who failed as a dramatist and became the most distinguished critic in Europe. He was born in extreme poverty, of a family of noble rank; he was reared, to his nineteenth year, by charity; and, after working his way to education, and producing one not unsuccessful tragedy, "Warwick," he contracted a marriage with the daughter of a lemonade woman, instead of abandoning her to her fate, in the mode prescribed. Without resources, he and his agreeable wife sought an asylum at Ferney, where they were entertained and retained more than a year, as children of the house and of the Muses. Chabanon was with them there, and gives some instances of Voltaire's wondrous forbearance toward the exacting and positive young poet.

“La Harpe, one day [he says], objected to a criticism of a poem, which the patriarch had expressed with all the deference and gentleness possible. The defense was less amiable than the attack. Any other than Voltaire would have taken offense when the young poet said to him, ‘Let us speak no more of it; the passage will surely remain as it is!’ Far from being discouraged by this reply, which was at least vigorous, the old man rejoined, ‘My son, you will make me die of mortification if you do not change the metaphor.’ A metaphor, indeed, was the cause of all this noise. Oh, the frivolous minds of men! La Harpe, in speaking of commerce, had written, ‘*This great tree of commerce extending far its fruitful branches.*’ Voltaire condemned the figure, maintaining that a tree, being motionless from its nature, could not serve as an emblem of commerce, which was inseparable from movement.

“I kept silence during this long debate, in which the ill-assorted tones of the two contestants caused me so much surprise. Summoned several times to give my opinion, I decided in favor of La Harpe. ‘The two metaphors,’ said I, ‘of the *branches* of commerce and of the *fruits* of commerce are generally received; then you have all the tree.’ ‘Humph!’ said Voltaire, ‘there is some truth in that; but my son will not the less fell his tree.’”¹

Another visitor, Charles Pougens, relates a similar scene between La Harpe and the patriarch: —

“The excessive irritability of La Harpe was so visible that even M. de Voltaire, his master, to whom he assuredly owed great consideration and some gratitude, was not safe against the attacks of his illumor. One day, at Ferney, La Harpe read to Voltaire some scenes of a tragedy, which, as usual, he thought excellent, because generally they cost him a great deal of trouble to write. The illustrious author of ‘Zaïre,’ ‘Mérope,’ and ‘Brutus’ said to him, ‘Come, Petit’ (this was the pet name by which he called La Harpe), ‘read me again all that scene; perhaps I have misunderstood it.’ La Harpe began again. Then Voltaire wished to make some observations. The young poet flew into a passion, and ended by saying offensive things to his master. ‘Ah! Petit is angry,’ replied the patriarch, laughing with all his might. Happily, dinner was announced, and La Harpe, who was not insensible to the pleasures of the table, was appeased.”²

Chabanon records also that the young poet did not hesitate to take great liberties with the works of his master. In the

¹ Tableau de Quelques Circonstances de ma Vie. Par Chabanon. Page 144.

² Lettres Philosophiques. Par Charles Pougens. Page 36.

private theatricals he played a leading part in one of Voltaire's tragedies. "Papa," said he to Voltaire, "I have changed some verses of my part, which appeared to me feeble." "Let me hear them, my son," said the aged poet. The young man recited them, while the author listened attentively. "Good, my son," said he; "that goes better. Always change in the same way, and I can only gain by it." Emboldened by impunity, or, rather, by the applause bestowed on his amendments, La Harpe cut and altered a new piece without notifying Voltaire, who pricked up his ears on hearing these unexpected changes. Far from being angry, he cried out from his seat, "He is right; it is better so!"

He became indeed warmly attached to La Harpe, as well as to his wife, who also wrote verses, and bore her part well in the life of the château. Desirous to place them in Paris with some certain resources, so indispensable then, and always, to a becoming literary career, he besought from the comptroller-general permission to settle half of his own royal pension of two thousand francs a year upon the young author; asking the minister to give it in the king's name, and not to mention his own agency in the benefaction. This letter of Voltaire to the minister was found, a few years ago, with seventy-two others, in a grocer's shop in Paris, whence they were rescued by a happy chance, and now await the next editor of the correspondence. It is an excellent specimen of Voltaire's manner on such occasions.

"MR. COMPTROLLER-GENERAL, — If it were necessary in France to pension all the men of talent, it would be, I am aware, a wound for your finances, very honorable, it is true, but very disastrous, and the treasury could not suffice for it. Hence, although few men can be met of a merit as solid as that of M. de la Harpe, I do not presume to claim for him a pension for merit in indigence; I desire simply to encroach upon your prerogatives, and correct the item [*contrôler le chiffre*] of two thousand livres, with which his majesty has been pleased to gratify me. It seems to me that, as M. de la Harpe has no pension, mine is too large by half, and that it ought to be divided between him and me. I should therefore be most grateful to you, monsieur, if you would be pleased to sanction this arrangement, and cause to be forwarded to M. de la Harpe the warrant for his pension of a thousand francs, without letting him know that I have had any part in the mat-

ter. He will be easily persuaded, as will every one else, that this pension is a just recompense for the services which he has rendered to literature."¹

The request was not granted. Perhaps some of La Harpe's college escapades, which had caused his imprisonment for several months, were remembered against him. He was never informed of this attempt to serve him.

Such bountiful entertainment of hopeful dramatists at Ferney had an effect similar to that which followed the marriage of Mademoiselle Corneille. It attracted other dramatists, whose works proved less interesting.

It is to be regretted that so few of "the brethren" of the Encyclopædia left records in detail of their visits to Ferney. Marmontel, whose agreeable narrative we have read, was a literary man, rather than a philosopher. Diderot never saw Ferney. Damiaville wrote nothing of his visit that has been preserved. D'Alembert was twice at Ferney; the last time in 1770. The King of Prussia, whose Paris correspondent he then was, hearing that his health was much broken, urged him to try the tour of Italy, and sent him six thousand francs for his expenses. D'Alembert took the road to Ferney, intending to make his way thence to Rome. In two months, to the surprise of his friends, he was at home again in Paris, without having seen Italy. We have two explanations of the mystery. To the King of Prussia he wrote that he dreaded the fatigue of such an extensive tour in a land of bad inns; adding, "I have returned three thousand five hundred francs of the sum your majesty was pleased to grant, of which I had no need." The Abbé Duvernet gives another explanation:—

"Toward the end of 1770, D'Alembert left Paris for the tour of Italy, and stopped at Ferney on his way, intending to remain but a few days. The charm of Voltaire's unequalled conversation detained him nearly a month, and he returned to Paris without having seen the Italian sky. He said to me, on his arrival at home, 'For almost a month I was in admiration. What constantly astonished me was the manner, at once learned and light, with which he discussed the profoundest subjects. I desired to go to Italy in quest of health, and I found it at Ferney. The pleasure of living and conversing

¹ Voltaire et Genève. Par Gustave Desnoiresterres. Page 192.

with the first philosopher of the age made me lose the desire I had of going to Rome to see the first magician of Europe.' ”

Duvernoy remarks that Voltaire was never in his best mood in a large company, particularly a company which had come to the château, as he used to say, *to see the rhinoceros*. In a small circle, or with a single D'Alembert, he poured out all the wealth of his gathered stores, continuing to converse sometimes until two or three in the morning. He cordially returned D'Alembert's affection. One of his German visitors asked him, one day, to write his name in an album, with that “something else,” that “anything you please,” which is so embarrassing to a preoccupied mind. Voltaire, after declining, turned over the pages of the album, and saw the name of D'Alembert. He wrote his own name under it, with this sentiment in Latin, “He was the friend of D'Alembert” (*Hic fuit Dalemberti amicus*).¹

Several noted visitors to the patriarch of letters left extensive records of their conversations with him. Among the rest it was inevitable that many British travelers should find their way to a spot so convenient and so famous. Voltaire's interest in English matters never ceased, and he kept up with the literature of England with much diligence. When Boswell was at Ferney, in 1766, he even affected the English roughness of speech, and called Dr. Johnson “a superstitious dog.” Boswell tells us that he mollified him by telling him what Johnson had said of the King of Prussia's works. “He writes,” Johnson had once said, “just as you may suppose Voltaire's foot-boy to do who has been his amanuensis.” Upon hearing this he again tried the English manner, saying that Dr. Johnson was “a very honest fellow.” It was on this occasion that Voltaire said, “Pope drives a handsome chariot, with a couple of neat, trim nags; Dryden, a coach and six stately horses.” Boswell visited Rousseau, also, and was much pleased with him; upon reporting which to the burly monster of prejudice, Johnson roared out, “Rousseau, sir, is a very bad man! I would sign a sentence for his transportation sooner than that of any felon who has gone from the Old Bailey these many years.” Boswell asked, “Sir, do you think he is

¹ Journal de Paris, September 8, 1778.

as bad a man as Voltaire?" Johnson replied, "Why, sir, it is difficult to settle the proportion of iniquity between them."

Voltaire used to compare the English to their own beer: froth at the top, dregs at the bottom, and the middle excellent.

Speaking of the history of England, he once said, "The hangman should write their history, for he has usually settled their disputes."

Charles James Fox, a youth of nineteen, passed through Switzerland, on his way home from Italy, in 1768. Voltaire had received his elder brother at Les Délices some years before. Unfortunately, we have no account of the visit of Charles Fox to Ferney, except a slight notice written fifty-six years afterwards by his traveling companion, Mr. U. Price. In reply to Fox's note asking permission to call, Voltaire said that the name of Fox sufficed, though he scarcely received any visitors, and that they "had come to bury him;" which, on referring to his letters of the time, we conjecture to mean that he had been suffering from a bad cold. "He did not," says Mr. Price, "ask us to dine with him, but conversed a short time, walking backward and forward in his garden, gave us some chocolate, and dismissed us. All I can recollect of his conversation is that, after giving us a list of some of his works, which he thought might open our minds and free us from any religious prejudices, he said, 'These are some of the works with which you should fortify yourselves.'"¹

There is an amusing anecdote of an English visitor, which has been printed in perhaps twenty different versions. The best authority for it is that of Wagnière, who gives it thus:—

"M. Milles, an Englishman, on his way to Rome, visited Ferney, and asked M. de Voltaire if he had not some orders to give him for that city. Voltaire replied, 'No; but if, by chance, you meet the Grand Inquisitor, I beg you to bring me back his ears wrapped in a piece of music paper.' The Englishman did not understand the jest, and took the words in their literal sense. When he reached Rome, he spoke of the commission which M. de Voltaire had given him. His remarks reached the ears of the Pope, Clement XIV., and when M. Milles had his audience of the Pope his Holiness said to him, 'M. de Voltaire, as I learn, has given you some orders for this country. I

¹ Memorials of Charles James Fox. By Lord Russell. Volume i., page 59.

pray you, when you see him again, to say to him that his commission is not feasible, because to-day the Grand Inquisitor has neither ears nor eyes !' This incident made some noise at Rome, and M. de Voltaire was informed of it. He wrote about it to the Cardinal de Bernis, then French ambassador at Rome, and added to his letter some pretty verses for the Pope. The cardinal replied that the Pope had taken in good part the pleasantries of M. de Voltaire, as well in verse as in prose, that he desired to see him more holy, and that he was flattered with his esteem."

In 1770, Dr. Charles Burney, the English composer, now remembered as the father of Fanny Burney, the novelist, made his musical tour of Europe. He heard Voltaire converse, and Frederic play the flute. The reader will be interested in an enthusiast's account of his visit to Ferney.

DR. CHARLES BURNEY'S NARRATIVE.

"I approached his house with reverence and a curiosity of the most minute kind. I inquired *when* I first trod on his domain; I had an intelligent and talkative postilion, who answered all my questions very satisfactorily. Voltaire's estate is very large here, and he is building pretty farm-houses upon it. He has erected on the Geneva side a quadrangular *justice*, or gallows, to show that he is the seigneur. One of his farms, or rather manufacturing houses, — for he is establishing a manufacture upon his estate, — was so handsome that I thought it was his château. We drove to Ferney through a charming country, covered with corn and vines, in view of the lake and mountains of Gex, Switzerland, and Savoy. On the left hand, approaching the house, is a neat chapel, with this inscription :—

DEO
EREXIT
VOLTAIRE,
M DCC LXI.

"I sent to inquire whether a stranger might be allowed to see the house and gardens, and was answered in the affirmative. A servant soon came and conducted me into the cabinet or closet where his master had just been writing, which is never shown when he is at home; but he having walked out, I was allowed that privilege. From thence I passed to the library, which is not a very large one, but well filled. Here I found a whole-length figure in marble of himself, recumbent in one of the windows, and many curiosities in another room: a bust of himself, made not two years since; his mother's picture; that of his niece, Madame Denis; of his brother, M. Dupuis; of the Calas family,

and others. It is a very neat and elegant house, not large, nor affectedly decorated.

“ I should first have remarked that, close to the chapel, between that and the house, is the theatre, which he built some years ago, where he treated his friends with some of his own tragedies ; it is now only used as a receptacle for wood and lumber, there having been no play acted in it these four years. The servant told me his master was seventy-eight, but very well. ‘ *Il travaille,*’ said he, ‘ *pendant dix heures chaque jour.*’ He studies ten hours every day, writes constantly without spectacles, and walks out with only a domestic, often a mile or two. ‘ *Et le voilà, là bas !*’ (And see yonder where he is !)

“ He was going to his workmen. My heart leaped at the sight of so extraordinary a man. He had just then quitted his garden, and was crossing the court before his house. Seeing my chaise, and me on the point of mounting it, he made a sign to his servant who had been my cicerone to come to him, in order, I suppose, to inquire who I was. After they had exchanged a few words together, he approached the place where I stood motionless in order to contemplate his person as much as I could when his eyes were turned from me ; but, on seeing him move toward me, I found myself drawn by some irresistible power toward him, and, without knowing what I did, I insensibly met him half-way.

“ It is not easy to conceive it possible for life to subsist in a form so nearly composed of mere skin and bone as that of M. de Voltaire. He complained of decrepitude, and said he supposed I was curious to form an idea of the figure of one walking after death. However, his eyes and whole countenance are still full of fire, and, though so emaciated, a more lively expression cannot be imagined.

“ He inquired after English news, and observed that poetical squabbles had given way to political ones ; but he seemed to think the spirit of opposition as necessary in poetry as in politics. ‘ *Les querelles d’autres sont pour le bien de la littérature, comme dans un gouvernement libre les querelles des grands et les clamours des petits sont nécessaires à la liberté.*’¹ And added, ‘ When critics are silent, it does not so much prove the age to be correct as dull.’ He inquired what poets we had now ; I told him that we had Mason and Gray. ‘ They write but little,’ said he, ‘ and you have no one who lords it over the rest, like Dryden, Pope, and Swift.’ I told him that it was one of the inconveniences of periodical journals, however well executed, that they often silenced modest men of genius, while impudent blockheads were impenetrable, and unable to feel the critic’s scourge ; that Mr.

¹ Disputes among authors are of use to literature, as the quarrels of the great and the clamors of the little, in a free government, are necessary to liberty.

Gray and Mr. Mason had both been illiberally treated by mechanical critics, even in newspapers; and added that modesty and love of quiet seemed, in these gentlemen, to have got the better even of their love of fame.

“During this conversation, we approached the buildings that he was constructing near the road to his château. ‘These,’ said he, pointing to them, ‘are the most innocent, and perhaps the most useful, of all my works.’ I observed that he had other works, which were of far more extensive use, and would be much more durable than those. He was so obliging as to show me several farm-houses that he had built, and the plans of others; after which I took my leave, for fear of breaking in upon his time, being unwilling to rob the public of things so precious as the few remaining moments of this great and universal genius.”¹

It must not be supposed that all his visitors approached him in this reverential spirit. He employed artifice, sometimes, to ascertain, before launching into free conversation, whether or not his guest was “in the movement.” A court lady of high rank, a daughter of M. de Nivernois, visiting Ferney, spoke with enthusiasm of the mighty Alps, in full view from the garden. Voltaire seized the opportunity to learn whether she was of the communion of her mother, who was a devout Catholic, or of her father, who professed to be a follower of Confucius. “Yes,” said he, “these mountains are magnificent horrors, as it is from them that come to us colds, catarrhs, and fevers. Madame would render a great service to the country if she would be pleased to remove them farther away; a little grain of her faith would suffice for that.” “I am very sorry for it, monsieur,” she replied, “but those mountains will remain where they are.” It was enough. She had read her *Philosophical Dictionary*. From that moment the conversation could be free and agreeable.

Sometimes it was otherwise. A Genevan lady, as pastor Gaberel reports, visited him one day, accompanied by her little daughter. Voltaire found the child much to his taste, and hastened to render her a service in his own way. “What a charming little creature!” he exclaimed. “She is, I think, as studious as she is beautiful?” “Oh, yes, monsieur,” re-

¹ *Present State of Music in France and Italy*. By Charles Barney, Mus. D. London, 1779. Page 57.

plied the mother; "nevertheless, there is one thing which she cannot learn." "What is that, then?" "It is her catechism." "And why is that?" "She comprehends nothing of it!" "Oh!" cried Voltaire, "what intelligence you possess, my little dear! You do not comprehend it? Ah! from the mouths of children comes the truth! You do not understand your catechism? Here, my child, see this magnificent peach-tree! Pick as many as you wish!" The poor mother was dismayed at this unexpected turn.

The pastor adds that a traveler who visited Geneva at this period experienced much embarrassment. "One day," said this stranger, "I dined at a house where a rolling fire of pleasantries brought from Ferney enlivened the company. The next day I was at the house of people of the same name, where I wished to repeat some of the anti-Christian jests with which I had been regaled the evening before. A polite remark of the lady of the house notified me that her guests respected the gospel. Nevertheless, it appears to me that almost one third of the rich families are infatuated with Voltaire, and his success is not less great among the artisans."

The Ferney stories to which this traveler alludes were well calculated to enliven the dinner-table. "If you subtract pride from priests," remarked a visitor, "nothing remains." Voltaire said, "Then, sir, you count gluttony nothing." Being asked what he thought the age of the world might be, he replied, "I know not; the world is an old coquette who conceals her age."

Once, in these late years of his life, he had the pleasure of entertaining at Ferney two sons of his ancient English friend and host, Sir Everard Falkener, long before deceased. The young men took Ferney on their way to Italy, and received the warmest welcome there. He could tell them of their father as he was in his bachelor days, fifty years before. Being seated between the brothers at his own table, he took them by the hand, and said with emotion, "*Mon Dieu!* how happy I am to find myself between two Falkeners."¹

We are apt to suppose, from the alertness and gayety which marked his demeanor and his letters, that he passed his life with little fear of the manifold and extreme perils which al-

¹ 1 Lettres Inédites, 75.

ways encompassed him. Duvernet, who had particular means of knowing, from his intimacy with the Voltairean circle at Paris, informs us that he was liable to fits of panic. In his later years, Duvernet intimates it was the dread of crazy zealots which troubled him most. The Clements, the Damiens, the Ravailacs, he would say, thought to please God by assassinating kings.

“Who can assure me that the same poison which set those wretches on fire will not madden the weak brain of some fanatic? Who can assure me that a priest of Savoy, regarding me as the enemy of God because I am the enemy of his prejudices, will not come here in the hope of atoning for his sins and gaining Paradise by devoutly assassinating me?”

“These terrors, indeed, he did not experience every day. Often he escaped them by going alone to visit his gardens, orchards, stables; to see his plantations, his fields, his flocks; to lose himself in his woods, and there regain his tranquillity. He would visit and encourage his tenants of the village, exhorting some to patience and labor, others to justice and union. When he appeared in the streets of Ferney he was at once surrounded by a multitude of inhabitants. Men and women, young and old, artists and laborers, Protestants and Catholics, all pressed about him, and listened to him with eagerness. They questioned him with a respectful familiarity, and he replied with kindness and indulgence, speaking in such a way as to be understood by all. His life was truly patriarchal.

“Despite all the happiness which he enjoyed in making others happy, it is true that the fear which he had of fanatics was only too well founded. This apprehension was the consequence of a multitude of anonymous letters, by which Christian charity pleased itself with tormenting him. Most of those letters seemed to come from mad-houses, and it was this which indicated the danger. One would write to him in the name of the Eternal Father, and another in the name of the devil; one called him the eldest son of Beelzebub, and another a brand from hell. One, to recompense him for the harm which he had done the church, threatened to burn his house; and another, exhorting him to prepare for death, threatened to kill him. These pious notifications, which he always began by ridiculing, very often awoke in him a feeling of alarm, of which he could not rid himself, especially when he reflected upon all the efforts he had made during fifty years to uproot superstition everywhere. Voltaire could reasonably fear to be punished for it. An ill-instructed devotee permits himself to take vengeance when he imagines that it pleases God.

“As he was walking, one day, in his gardens, while the thunder was rolling heavily, the son of Marshal Villars thought he perceived in him a movement of fear. ‘Are you, then, afraid of the thunder, Mr. Philosopher?’ said he. Voltaire replied, ‘Yes; and I am still more afraid of the priests and monks, considering all the advantages they would derive from my death. They would say from their pulpits that God had stricken me with lightning only because I had ridiculed *them*. The foolish people would believe them, and the progress of philosophy would be put back half a century. Let us go into the house.’”¹

There were times, too, when his extreme susceptibility overcame him in another way. There were moments when he was seized with compassion for the unhappiness of our weak and heavy-laden race; and this was particularly apt to be the case when he was occupied with history. “Ah, my friends,” said he, one day, looking up from his work with moist eyes, “how miserable men have been! How they were to be pitied in past times! And their lot was pitiable only because they were fools and cowards!”

¹ Duvernet, page 427. Paris, 1797.

CHAPTER XL.

THE NEW REIGN.

OLD things, meanwhile, were passing away in France. May 10, 1774, Louis XV., who for more than fifty-nine years had been styled King of France, died, and his grandson Louis XVI. reigned in his stead. The old king lived his scandalous life to the last moment of possibility; then he confessed, and received absolution; the chief priest saying, "Although the king owes an account of his conduct to God alone, he is sorry to have caused scandal to his subjects, and declares that he wishes to live henceforward only to be the support of the faith and of religion, and for the happiness of his subjects."

We must beware of believing too readily any of the court anecdotes of that period, or any other period; but, if there is only a small portion of truth in the stories printed of this unfortunate man's last days, we must admit that the morals and the manners of his part of the palace were lower than those of a Zulu kraal. The priests gave him prompt absolution, and buried him in extremely "consecrated ground," amid the contemptuous indifference of the people of France. Perhaps no one judged him more charitably than his brother king, Frederick of Prussia, who wrote thus to Voltaire, January 5, 1775:

"If Louis XV. had a weakness for the clergy, it was quite natural. He was reared by priests in superstition the most stupid, and he was surrounded all his life either by devotees, or by persons who were too good courtiers to shock his prejudices. How often was it said to him, 'Sire, God placed you upon the throne to protect the church. The sword which he put into your hand is to defend the church. You bear the name of Most Christian King only to be the scourge of heresy and unbelief. The church is the true bulwark of the throne; its priests are divine organs, who preach submission to the people. They hold consciences in their hands; you are more the master of your subjects through their voices than through your armies.' Let

such discourses be often repeated to a man who lives in dissipation, and who employs not a single moment of his life in reflection, he will believe them, and act accordingly. This was the case with Louis XV. I pity him, and condemn him not."

In writing these words the King of Prussia gave the secret of many courts and composed the history of many kings. Voltaire, also, had his word on this occasion. He was, as Frenchmen usually are, an attentive observer of public events. He had a public mind. Readers of his works will recall many urgent and even passionate pleas for public improvements, major and minor, from clearing the tragic stage of dandies to reforming the criminal law, from improving bee-hives to reconstructing the system of taxation. He was among the first to rebuke the abuse of royal authority in spending millions of the people's money upon the water-works of Versailles, and leaving Paris to dip a large part of its daily supply of water from the Seine with pails; and he knew how to say such things with the minimum of offense and the maximum of effect. In his essay upon the "Embellishments of Paris," written in 1749, an essay that recommends and foretells the beautiful metropolis of to-day, he remarked that the money expended upon three *bosquets* of one of the royal parks would have sufficed to beautify Paris; and he leaves the reader to imagine what would have been the effect if Louis XIV., instead of wasting four hundred millions upon three royal abodes, had possessed a public soul, and expended it in alleviating the common lot of Frenchmen. Indeed, we see in his writings, in considerable development, that spirit of public improvement which is now fast changing the aspect and condition of all human habitations, giving to all men a share of the noblest and costliest delights. He had in him much of that spirit which will one day render private magnificence shameful or ridiculous, when nothing will presume to be splendid and immense unless it is for the public.

A few days after the death of the old king he published an anonymous pamphlet of sixteen pages, entitled "Funeral Eulogium of Louis XV., Pronounced in an Academy, May 25, 1774." He contrived in this essay to delineate Louis XV. as a good-natured imbecile, without violating the conventional forms, and without using a word of harsh judgment. The exemplary daughters of the king might have read it with pleas-

ure. It was characteristic of him to select for special mention the founding of the military school upon the plans of his ancient friend and benefactor, Paris Duverney, who died four years before Louis XV. It cost the banker some years of intrigue to get the king to take the trouble merely to visit the school. Voltaire observes that, while Louis XV. did not himself conceive great projects, his judgment seized them when they were presented to him, and thus he formed L'Ecole Militaire, so useful a resource to the nobility. "It was devised by a man who was not himself noble, and with posterity it will confer greater honor than titles." Every king, he said in conclusion, has done some good. "From his successor we should expect perfect felicity, if it was in the power of men." At this point the imaginary orator broke off, to admit of the announcement of ill-news to the imaginary audience: the king's three faithful daughters had taken the small-pox, the disease of which their father had died,—which served as the occasion of an eloquent plea for inoculation.

The reign of mistresses was at an end in France. Dubarry had departed. It was necessary for Voltaire, at the age of seventy-eight, to establish new lines of defense, and ascertain how he stood with the new dispensers of power. This funeral oration, so ingenious a compromise between truth and falsehood, was a preliminary movement. Before the king was buried, he was in earnest correspondence with his guardian angel concerning his status as a citizen of France. Louis XV. had said, "I do not wish Voltaire to come to Paris." How did that affect him now? What would Louis XVI. say on the subject? He did not, it is true, wish to live in Paris, although Madame Denis longed for nothing so much; but suppose he should fancy to take a turn in that direction. Was there anything to hinder, except, of course, his unfortunate health? There had been, he could not deny, a little broil (*tracasserie*) between the defunct and himself,—a broil unknown to the greatest part of the public, verbal merely, which had left no trace after it. "It seems to me that I am an invalid who can take the air everywhere without a prescription from the doctors. Nevertheless, I should like the thing to be kept very secret. I think it would be easy to conceal myself in the crowd. There will be so many grand ceremonies, so many

grand *tracasseries*, that no one will think of mine. In a word, it would be too ridiculous that Jean-Jacques, the Genevan, should have permission to walk in the court of the archbishop, that Fréron can see 'L'Ecoissaise' performed, and that I cannot go either to mass or to the theatre in the city in which I was born."

He left the management of this delicate matter to his angel, who did not advise the invalid to take the air at Paris. There were difficulties in the way. The ill-starred young king, who had sense enough to half know how cruelly misplaced he was, confided his power to the trivial Maurepas, aged seventy-three, a man of the old court, from which he had been exiled twenty-five years before. Count d'Argental could not yet give his friend an assurance of safety in Paris, and Voltaire could not risk the affront of being ordered away. The year 1774 passed, and still he was uncertain. It was not a favorable sign that his effort to rehabilitate young D'Etalonde, the companion of the Chevalier de la Barre, was steadily resisted. Then a rumor ran over Paris that he was coming! It alarmed him; it was premature; it might call attention to his case, and cause the doubtful to become certain. He entreated his friends to contradict the report. How could he go to Paris, — he, who was deaf and blind, who spent three quarters of the day in bed close to the chimney corner, who was obliged to wear always a big cap to keep his brain from addling, who took medicine three times a week, and who articulated with great difficulty, having no more teeth than he had eyes and ears! "At Paris, I could not help attending the Academy," he added, "and I should die of cold at the first session." And besides, "Could I shut my door, having no *portier*, to all the rabble of blackguards [*racaille des polissons*] self-styled people of letters, who would have the idiotic curiosity to come and see my skeleton? And then, if I should take it into my head to die in your city of Paris, imagine what an *embarras*, what scenes, and what ridicule! I am a country rat, that could not subsist at Paris unless in a hole quite unknown, and, during the short time of my stay, I should not go out of it." At present, he would not attempt even so much, but would remain snug and safe in his country hole.

Public affairs became of absorbing interest to all solvent

and patriotic men, so long outraged by the spectacle of an annually increasing deficit and an annually increasing waste. Few men have ever lived, even in frugal France, who had the instinct of solvency so strong as Voltaire. With a revenue of two hundred thousand francs per annum, he always kept his expenditure within seventy-five thousand; and if he had had but twenty francs a week he would have lived upon fifteen. He hated the odious Abbé Terrai, Louis XV.'s last finance minister, incompetent, unprincipled, and dissolute. Wagnière records that the wife of a farmer-general, knowing the difficulty of seeing him, sent in to say that she was the niece of the Abbé Terrai. Upon hearing the name of Terrai, he shuddered, and said, "Tell the lady that I have but one tooth left, and keep that for her uncle."

His joy, therefore, upon the elevation of Turgot to the control of the finances was extreme, and he hailed all his great measures with a rapture of applause. His epigram upon hearing of Turgot's accession to power was a polite way of inserting that solitary tooth of his in the uncle of his lady visitor, —

" Je crois en Turgot fermement.
Je ne sais pas ce qu'il veut faire,
Mais je sais que c'est le contraire
De ce qu'on fit jusqu'à présent."¹

Turgot was indeed a man after his own heart. A French nobleman, descended from a line of gifted and patriotic men, himself of much experience in the government of a province, Turgot, at the age of forty-seven, found himself, through the favor of Madame de Maurepas, at the head of French finance. He had two great principles: Freedom of Trade and No Waste. Voltaire had entertained him at Ferney, and knew him well from the report of his fellow-student, the Abbé Morellet; for Turgot had been destined to one of the high places of the church, and had been two years an inmate of the Sorbonne. Voltaire helped him out of that abyss. "He knew by heart," says Morellet, "most of Voltaire's fugitive pieces, and many passages of his poems and tragedies." The Newtonian astronomy, also, he seized with avidity, and thus

¹ I believe in Turgot firmly. I do not know what he wishes to do, but I know it is the contrary of what has been done hitherto.

escaped the hideous destiny his father had chosen for him. Voltaire gave him all possible support in his well-nigh impossible task of extricating France without a convulsion. In September, 1774, when Turgot published the decree restoring free trade in grain throughout the kingdom, he sent him this note: "The old invalid of Ferney thanks nature for having made him live long enough to see the decree of council of September 13, 1774. He presents his respects and vows to the author." Soon he had to recognize his goodness in giving promotion to the brother of the late Damilaville, his justice in freeing Gex from a portion of its unequal burden, and his virtue in refusing the three hundred thousand francs which the farmers-general were accustomed, from time immemorial, to present to a new comptroller-general. "The old invalid of Ferney," he wrote to the minister, "has heard of a hundred thousand crowns belonging of right to a sage, and sent back to the royal treasury by a virtuous man. . . . Good old man Simeon blesses God that his ears have heard of our salvation."

The minister asked the patriarch not to style him Monseigneur. Simeon could not gratify him in this. "My bishop," he replied, "who pretends to be prince of Geneva, the nobles who carry off my money and ruin my colony, are not my lords; but the author of the grain edict, the humane, enlightened, wise and beneficent minister shall be my only lord." In January, 1775, the "very old Owl of Mount Jura" thanked his "true lord" for a new edict, which allowed the butchers of Paris to sell meat during Lent. Later, when Turgot had put the last hand to the freedom of Gex, the rumor spread over Europe that Voltaire was to be made marquis of that strip of land. "Tell M. Turgot," he wrote, "that I agree with him upon my marquisate. Marquis Crébillon, Marquis Marmontel, Marquis Voltaire, would be good for nothing but to show at the fair with the monkeys."

For nearly two years Turgot held his ground, to the ever-rising hopes of disinterested observers. He was in the midst of his great career, forcing salvation upon that frivolous court when he was suddenly dismissed. A woman gave him his place, and, as it seems, a woman deprived him of it,—the queen, whose rage for expensive pleasures could not endure the check of his unrelenting economy. He was dismissed,

and the last chance of reform without revolution passed away. "Ah, *mon Dieu*," wrote Voltaire, "what fatal news I hear! France would have been too happy! What will become of us? Could you find time to reassure me by a single word? I am prostrate and desperate." The news was but too true; and, indeed, the wonder was that so great and wise a minister held his post for twenty months. Voltaire relieved his feelings by composing the tribute to Turgot, entitled "To a Man," beginning, —

"Philosophe indulgent, ministre citoyen,
Qui ne cherchas le vrai que pour faire le bien."¹

After an interval of chaos, Necker was called to the department of finance. He shared in the new hopes of the country; but, by that time, France, against M. Turgot's sound advice, was committed to the American cause, and the deficit yawned wide. The outcry that arose when the king was induced to appoint a Protestant to high place called forth another epigram from Ferney, ending, —

"On ne peut manquer son salut,
Quand on fait celui de la France."²

Under Necker, as under Turgot, he continued to labor for the extinction of the remains of serfdom and the "cleansing of the Augean stable" of the criminal system. He kept the government advised that "there were still Frenchmen who were in the same legal condition as the beasts of the land which they watered with their tears." In his various petitions and memoirs on this subject, he described minutely the disabilities under which the serfs labored, and drew up in detail a plan by which their feudal lords could be fairly compensated for the loss of their labor.

All Europe seemed then to be engaged in reforms, and all the leading minds appeared to be buoyant with hope. Howard was in full career in England. The Swiss were striving to adapt their laws to modern needs and tastes. Frederic of Prussia, Catherine II., Louis XVI., Gustavus of Sweden, Joseph of Austria, Jefferson and Madison in Virginia, all seemed intent on the same great business of liberalizing ancient law

¹ Indulgent philosopher, citizen minister, who sought the true only to do the good.

² One cannot fail of his salvation when he procures that of France.

and humanizing cruel usage. The sublime, the always urgent, the never-ending task of alleviating the lot of the sons of men seemed to be, at length, accepted by the rulers and owners of the earth as their natural and proper vocation. This was, more than ever before, the burden of Voltaire's correspondence with his monarchs. Frederic, who had thirty years before abolished torture, was now engaged in one of the refined details of adaptation, extremely difficult to touch without doing harm. He wished to lessen the temptation to destroy illegitimate children by lessening the shame of bearing them. He abolished, as he told Voltaire in 1777, the custom of admonishing the mothers in church; he removed the legal obstacles to their honorable marriage, and provided suitable asylums both for the mothers during confinement, and for their children afterwards. The king owed to Voltaire that, notwithstanding all these measures, he had not yet been able "to uproot the unnatural prejudice which induced such mothers to get rid of their offspring." If travelers in Germany are to be believed, time has accomplished there what Frederic found impossible.

From 1774, all eyes in Europe were frequently directed toward the great events that were occurring on the other side of the Atlantic. The Continental Congress met in September of that year at Philadelphia, "among my dear Quakers," as Voltaire remarked. He did not understand the controversy, at first, and thought his dear Quakers were false to their principles in raising troops to fight against the English Parliament. "The English," he wrote to Frederic, in March, 1776, "are tired of their felicity. I do not believe my dear Quakers will fight, but they will give money, and others will fight for them. I am no great politician; your majesty knows it well; but I doubt if the ministry at London is equal to ours. We were ruined; to-day the English are ruining themselves: to each his turn." When Voltaire wrote this letter, Turgot was still in place; when Frederic answered it, Turgot had been out of office a month. The king said he was not surprised at his dismissal, and added, "I represent to myself Louis XVI. as a young ewe surrounded by old wolves. He will be very fortunate if he escapes them." In the same letter, Frederic pours out all his scorn upon the Duke of Hesse for "selling his sub-

jects to the English as beasts are sold for the slaughter-house." He pitied "those poor Hessians, who will terminate as unhappily as *uselessly* their career in America."

Voltaire, too, as Duvernet intimates, shared the feeling of the King of Prussia upon this subject. The Duke of Brunswick visited Ferney just as the Hessian troops were embarking for America, and he happened to come upon the day celebrated every year at Ferney in honor of its lord, when the two companies of troops paraded in full uniform. "You have some very fine soldiers here," said the prince. Voltaire replied, with a certain manner well understood by the by-standers, "These are not soldiers; they are my friends. Yes, prince, a regiment of friends." He had become, in fact, a very good American, and lamented the reverses of the patriot army in the latter half of 1776. "You know," he wrote to D'Alembert in October, "that Dr. Franklin's troops have been beaten by those of the King of England. Alas! philosophers are beaten everywhere. Reason and liberty are ill-received in this world. No matter; courage, my very dear philosopher!" With Dr. Franklin he had been in friendly relations since 1767, when he sent him messages of good-will to London. He had a lively sense of the utility of lightning-rods as an incidental crusher of *l'Infâme*, as we see in the article "Tonnerre," of the Philosophical Dictionary.

CHAPTER XLI.

LAST LABORS AT FERNEY.

HE was eighty-two years of age in 1776. (His literary activity during the last four years of his life, as attested by the catalogue of his publications, exceeded that of any man of his age of whom we have record.) It would be incredible, if the evidence of it were not visible and palpable in the shape of at least thirty works, from a four-page pamphlet to a commentary on the Bible in two volumes, from epigrams of one stanza to five-act tragedies in verse. Some of these had been written, or partly written, in previous years; but his vehemence seldom permitted him to keep a finished work long from the public, and nearly everything he wrote had an immediate and particular object, which delay would have frustrated. In his last three tragedies, "Don Pèdre," "Irène," and "Agathocles," there are traces of the author of "Mérope" and "Zaïre;" there are even entire scenes in his best manner; but neither of those dramas could have been successful on the stage apart from the interest felt by the public in the author. "Don Pèdre," upon which he labored longest and with the most fervor, which he also dedicated to D'Alembert in a long discourse, was never performed. It was not offered to the actors, but published as the work of a young man living in a remote province.

A curious proof both of his sleepless activity and of his loss of poetic power is mentioned by La Harpe, and confirmed by Wagnière. In 1777, the French Academy offered a prize for the best translation of the sixth book of the "Iliad." The poet of eighty-three years amused himself by competing, and sent his translation in the name of the Marquis de Villette. La Harpe, having learned the secret from the marquis himself, watched the effect of the piece upon the judges, of whom he was one. "It produced," he reports, "no sensation. Scarcely one fine verse was found in it, and it was hard to bear the

reading to the end. It would not even have obtained a mention, if I had not, in giving my opinion, represented to my colleagues that it was at least written very purely, a merit which the Academy ought always to encourage." The judges decided that none of the translations merited the prize, and gave to that of Voltaire only a mention as the fifth in point of excellence.¹

But in his humorous poems, in his burlesque tales, whether in verse or prose, in his essays and reviews, in his verses of badinage, compliment, and epigram, there is the airy lightness of touch, the inexhaustible fertility in comic ideas, the unerring tact, and the triumphant point of the time when he penciled verses upon a card, at Berlin, for the sisters of the King of Prussia. Thus, on perceiving, in 1775, that Frederic had placed the word IMMORTALI at the bottom of the porcelain bust of himself, which the king sent him, he acknowledged the compliment in these lines: —

" Vous êtes généreux ; vos bontés souveraines
Me font de trop riches présents :
Vous me donnez dans mes vieux ans
Une terre dans vos domaines." ²

Some months after, in 1776, a young lady at his house wished he might live many years. He replied with this stanza: —

" Vous voulez arrêter mon âme fugitive.
Ah, madame, je le vois bien,
De tout ce qu'on possède on ne veut perdre rien ;
On veut que son esclave vive." ³

About the same time he received from the publisher, Le Jay, a copy of La Beaumelle's pirate edition of "La Henriade," with offensive notes by the editor and by Fréron. Upon the cover the publisher had placed the portrait of Voltaire between those of his two enemies. He put the following epigram in circulation at Paris: —

" Le Jay vient de mettre Voltaire
Entre La Beaumelle et Fréron.
Ce serait vraiment un Calvaire,
S'il s'y trouvait un bon larron." ⁴

¹ Correspondance de La Harpe, vol. ii. p. 273.

² You are generous; your sovereign bounty makes me too rich presents: in my old age you give me an estate in your domains.

³ You wish to detain my fugitive soul. Ah, madame, I see plainly that we wish to lose nothing of all that we possess; we wish our slave to live.

⁴ Le Jay has placed Voltaire between La Beaumelle and Fréron. Truly, this would be a Calvary, if there was in the picture a penitent thief.

It seemed to cost him no exertion to do such things. One day, in 1777, when all was in readiness for the rehearsal of a play at Ferney, Madame Denis kept the company waiting a long time, while she completed her toilet. He wrote these lines to relieve his impatience: —

“ Si par hasard, pour argent ou pour or,
A vos boutons vous trouviez un remède,
Pent-être vous seriez moins laide ;
Mais vous seriez bien laide encore.”¹

There are fifty trifles of this kind, long and short, which his editors assign to these last years. Of all his later writings for the public, those that had the swiftest and the widest currency were his burlesque tales; which remain to this day among his most popular works, though the circumstances that called them forth ceased to exist long ago. The tone of mind which issued in the revolutionary spirit can in no way be more easily or more agreeably ascertained than by a careful reading of these unique and inimitable productions. The reader of to-day will not overvalue them, for he does not suffer from the abuses and perversions which they assisted to destroy, and he has learned that of all effective writing burlesque is the least meritorious. It has its place and its use; there are evils which nothing else can make head against; there are solemn and imposing inanities that would crush civilization if they were not made ridiculous. Nevertheless, it was not a good sign of the times that, as he grew older, he should have been impelled and compelled to keep educated Europe on the grin with this wondrous series of burlesques.

It was, probably, the very great success of the “Man with Forty Crowns,” published in 1768, that gave him the new impulse toward that form of composition. The “Man with Forty Crowns” became for a while as familiar a personage to the people of France as “Poor Richard” was for thirty years to the people of Pennsylvania. This tale is a burlesque, first, of the financial chaos which brought industrious and frugal France to bankruptcy fifteen years after the tale was written; and, secondly, of the economic nostrums that were proposed for the reduction of the chaos to order. It was a burlesque exhibi-

¹ If by chance, for silver or for gold, you should find a remedy for your pimples, you would perhaps be less ugly; but very ugly you would be still.

tion of that France which Turgot tried to save, and of that notion which he combated, so common to the impecunious sons of men, that there is a hocus-pocus science of finance that can make the books balance, though you continue to spend more than you receive. Malthus, Adam Smith, and Poor Richard may all have read this tale with advantage. When the heavy-laden Man of Forty Crowns a year ventures to ask the Geometer what would happen if the people of France should "take a fancy to have twice as many children" as they were then producing, the Geometer replies, "It would come to pass either that every one would have his income cut down one half, or that the land would have to produce double, or that there would be twice as many paupers, or that there would have to be twice as much gain by foreign commerce, or that half the people would have to go to America, or that one half the nation would eat the other half."

The scene which has in it most of satiric force is the fourth division of the tale, which admits the reader to the audience room of the minister of finance, on one of his public days. Nothing can be more comic or more blasting than this part of the story. It seems to be the very loading of the shell that blew the monarchy to pieces. The Man of Forty Crowns enters with his petition, and stands near the minister, awaiting his opportunity to present it. A monk, a fat tithe-owner, who had brought a suit against one of his fellow-citizens, whom he called *his peasants*, had the first hearing. Already this monk possessed more revenue than half of his parishioners put together, and he was lord of the fief besides. He claimed that his vassals, since they had with most arduous labor converted their thickets into vineyards, owed him the tenth part of their wine; a demand which amounted, reckoning the price of labor, poles, barrels, and cellarage, to more than a quarter of the product. "As the tenths," said he, "come to me of divine right, I ask for the quarter of my peasants' substance in the name of God." The minister blandly said to him, "I see how charitable you are!"

Next, a farmer-general, highly accomplished in his vocation, caught the minister's attention. "Monseigneur," said he, "that village can give nothing to this monk. As I made his parishioners pay during the past year thirty-two imposts

upon their wine, and as I afterwards fined them for drinking too much, they are entirely ruined. I have had their beasts and furniture sold, and they are still indebted to me. I oppose the demand of the reverend father." The minister replied, "You are right in claiming to be his rival. Both of you equally love your neighbor, and you both edify me."

Another monk sought a hearing, who, besides being rich in tithes, was *owner* of the peasants upon his estates, and to whom their property reverted at death. A cockney of Paris having by inadvertence lived a year and a day in one of the houses of this monk, and then died in it, the monk claimed the whole of the property of the inadvertent Parisian, and that by right divine. The minister felt that "the heart of this monk was as just and tender as that of the two others."

A fourth petitioner, the manager of the estate, now presented "a beautiful argument, by which he justified himself for having reduced twenty families to beggary." They had inherited property from their uncles, or aunts, or brothers, or cousins, and had paid the tax upon their inheritance. "The manager had generously proved to them that they had estimated their inheritances too low, that they were much richer than they believed; and having, in consequence, condemned them to pay a triple fine, having ruined them in expenses, and put in prison the fathers of families, he had bought their best possessions without untying his purse-strings. The minister said to him (in a tone a little bitter, in truth), 'Well done, good and faithful manager! Because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will constitute thee a farmer-general.' Nevertheless, he said aside to a master of requests, who stood beside him, "*We shall have to make these sacred and profane leeches disgorge! It is time to relieve the people, who, without our care and our justice, would never have anything to live upon, except in the other world.*"

This tale, of a hundred and fifty pages, contains several passages of this nature, which contributed to make familiar to the minds of Frenchmen the venerable and complex inheritance of outrage which had come to them from barbaric times. The fault of the work, as of so much other effective literature, is that the author selects some instances for burlesque exhibition which were more exceptional than representative; but it was

salutary for Frenchmen to know what wrongs *could* be committed under the forms of ancient law, and in accordance with ancient usage.

It is not necessary, and indeed it is not possible, within reasonable compass, to describe the series of tales which amused and kindled France during the last years of Voltaire's life: such as the "Princess of Babylon," in 1768; the "History of Jenni, or the Atheist and the Sage," in 1769; "The Letters of Amabed," an Eastern tale, in 1769; "The White Bull," also an Oriental story, in 1773; and other shorter works, which are accessible in every cultivated language. The method of all of them is substantially the same; but perhaps the most ingenious and amusing romance of his later years is that of the "White Bull," which turns upon the adventures of Nebuchadnezzar during the seven years of his pasturage. Among the characters in this story are the Witch of Endor, the serpent that tempted Eve, Balaam's ass, the whale that swallowed Jonah, and the dove that flew from Noah's ark. As the method was the same, so the object of the tales was similar. One of them begins thus: "The thinking portion of the human race; that is, *the hundred thousandth part* of the human race." The common aim of all these ingenious stories is to increase the magnitude of that decimal fraction; to make *more* people use their minds, and not view the universe with the eyes of professional interpreters thereof.

Every father of a family in France could follow the reasoning of the Man with Forty Crowns, even when he discoursed of questions of political economy. That French Poor Richard married upon his forty crowns, and soon rejoiced in the possession of a fine boy, hoping to give in due time ten new subjects to the king. He was the best basket-maker in the world, and his wife an excellent seamstress. Near their modest cottage, the home of frugal industry, was a big abbey, with a hundred thousand francs of annual revenue. Why, asks the honest basket-maker, should that handful of monks "engulf" so enormous a portion of my forty crowns? Are they more useful to their country than I am? Do they contribute, as I do, to the population of the country? "No; not, at least, in appearance." Do they cultivate the land? Do they defend the state when it is attacked? No. Then what do they

do? They pray to God for us. “ *Eh bien*, I will pray to God for them. *Let us share!*”

In 1770 the monks themselves could laugh at this as mere amusing paradox, and quote it as professors of political economy quote Paley's simile of the few fat pigeons, each with its huge heap of redundant corn, which great flocks of meagre birds eye with hungry despair. In 1792 the Jacobins were discussing these contrasts without laughter.

Of all the burlesques of Voltaire, the longest and the most laborious was one which appeared in 1776, entitled “The Bible at length Explained, by several Almoners of S. M. L. R. D. P.” This work, which was in two volumes, of nearly three hundred pages each, began at once to attract notice from the police, as well as from the public. The mystical letters in the title-page were all easily explained except the last. The commenting Almoners were those of *Sa Majesté le Roi de Prusse ou de Pologne*; but which? The King of Prussia, it was remarked, had no almoners; and as to the King of Poland, if he had any, they were not known to the learned world. The reading public were not long in discerning the hand of Voltaire in this elaborate publication; which was not a burlesque of the Bible, but of the commentators of the same, those industrious scribes who minister to the new want of civilization, — that of possessing rows of tall, thick, and strongly bound volumes which are never taken from their shelves. In this work the author gathered the absurdities into which men have fallen, in their impious attempt to degrade venerable legend and poetic myth into vulgar and impossible history. He showed the startling points of resemblance between the legendary prodigies of the Bible and those of other and older religions. He burlesqued throughout the grave manner of the professional commentator, and discussed the trivialities of interpretation in a tone that must have amused theologians when they read the work by themselves. It is edifying to note the pains he takes to refute the enemies of the faith, and how respectfully he quotes and considers previous commentators. If he gives at some length and with great force the objections of Collins, Shaftesbury, and Bayle, he does so, of course, only “to confute them;” and when human reason essays in vain to reconcile the irreconcilable he

humbly submits to the voice of the church, which has come to the aid of imperfect reason, and kindly declares that to be true which is obviously false. After reviewing the books of the New Testament, he comes at last to the question, What are we to believe concerning them? In answering this he drops the bantering manner of the previous pages, and speaks seriously, thus: —

“We know not who were the authors of these books, nor at what times they were written. We know only that they contradict one another, and that, taken as a whole, they contradict feeble human reason, the only light God gives us to judge by.

“It seems to us probable merely that Jesus having gained some adherents, having always insulted the Pharisees and the priests, and having succumbed to his enemies, who caused him to be crucified, his adherents avenged themselves by crying everywhere that God had raised him from the dead. Immediately after they separated themselves entirely from the Jewish sect. It was no longer a schism; it was a new sect, which combated all the others. They had all the obstinacy of Jews and all the enthusiasm of innovators. They spread themselves throughout the Roman empire, in which every religion was well received by a hundred different races. Christianity established itself at first among the poor. It was an association founded upon the primitive equality of men, and upon the disapproval of the Essenes and Therapeutæ, who were imitated by the first partisans of Jesus.

“But the more this society extended itself, the more it degenerated. Nature resumed her rights. The Christians, being excluded from the dignities of the empire, devoted themselves to commerce, as dissenters now do in all the countries of Europe. They acquired wealth; they lent money to the father of Constantine. The rest is known. Their fatal quarrels for metaphysical chimeras disturbed for a long time all the Roman empire. At length, this religion, driven from the East, where it was born, found refuge in the West, which it inundated with its own blood and the blood of the nations. To its principal pontiffs remain still the grace of heaven and the fatness of the earth. May they always enjoy them in peace! May they have pity upon the miserable! May they never make any miserable! And may the founder of this private sect, now become a dominant religion, — that Jewish founder, who was born poor and died poor, — not be always able to say, ‘My daughter, how little you resemble your father!’”

This peculiar commentary, Wagnière informs us, was intended to be on a more extensive scale; but, at eighty-two, it

behooves an author to take short flights, and so the work was brought to a conclusion in 1776. Next year, however, he expanded the concluding passage to the proportions he had originally intended, and published it separately as a "History of the Establishment of Christianity," a work as large as one of the volumes of the Commentary. Both these publications seemed to the polite circles of Paris superfluous. "Unfortunately," wrote one diarist, on chronicling the appearance of the Commentary, "the subject is exhausted; the cause is decided for those who are willing to avail themselves of their reason and their lights, and other people will no more read this Commentary than they do the ordinary kind."¹

If the subject was exhausted, the author was not; he seemed inexhaustible. Soon after the Commentary was off his hands, a letter came to him from M. de Cromot, steward of the household of "Monsieur" the brother of Louis XVI., who afterwards reigned as Louis XVIII. Monsieur, in fifteen days, would give a *fête* to the queen, then in the first resplendency of her reign, the lovely creature whom Burke described in his "Reflections upon the French Revolution." Voltaire had already celebrated her charms in more than one poem, and now M. de Cromot desired his aid for the *fête* in her honor. He replied, "In giving me the most agreeable commission with which I could be honored, you forgot one little bagatelle, which is that I am past eighty-two. You are like the God of the Jansenists, who gives commandments impossible to execute: and, the better to resemble that God, you do not fail to notify me that I have but fifteen days to prepare myself; so that the queen will have supped before I can get an answer to my letter." As it was impossible in the time to write a divertisement in form, he sent a sketch of a *fête* given at Vienna by the Austrian court sixty years before, called the "Host and Hostess."

"The emperor," he explained, "was the Host, and the empress was the Hostess; they received all the travelers who came to sup and sleep at their inn, and gave a good repast at the *table d'hôte*. All the travelers were dressed in the ancient manner of their country, and every one did his best in the way of respectfully cajoling the Hostess. The travelers

¹ Mémoires de Bachaument. July 26, 1776.

could have adventures ; some could make verses for the queen ; others would sing Italian airs ; there could be quarrels, missed rendezvous, and jests of all kinds. Each actor could invent his part, and shorten or prolong it at pleasure."

In three or four days he sent his outline, with songs, repartees, some dialogue, suggestions of scenes, characters, and effects. M. de Cromot seized the idea with avidity, and carried it out with taste and spirit. One scene, in which a Bohemian fortune-teller examines the hands of the Host and Hostess, as well as those of Monsieur and Madame, and sings their fortunes in verse, the aged poet wrote out in some detail. The *fête* was much admired. If the king did not shine as Host, the queen made amends as Hostess, since a fine lady never looks so well as in a peasant's costume ; and Marie Antoinette had wit enough to repeat the jests made for her.

The veteran dramatist, in the same year, 1776, while still laboring upon his last tragedies, "Irène" and "Agathocles," was deeply stirred by Pierre le Tourneur's "Essay upon Shakespeare," prefixed to his translation of Shakespeare's works. Voltaire had discovered Shakespeare ; but only as Columbus discovered America, without knowing what he had found. Pierre le Tourneur was the Frenchman who discerned the continental vastness and inexhaustible value of Voltaire's discovery. He found Shakespeare to be "the sovereign genius of the stage." His translation, in which he had the assistance of eminent scholars, ran to twenty volumes, and it remained, until recent times, with all its defects, the best source of information concerning the greatest of poets accessible to French readers. The success of the translation was a result of that fashionable taste for everything English which prevailed in France until the American war turned the currents of feeling another way. Voltaire had originated that taste. His countrymen had taken him at his word ; and now, in his old age, he saw his beloved Racine, his august Corneille, his universal Molière, and himself pushed rudely from their pedestals, and "a gifted barbarian" exalted in their stead, as the one master of the dramatic art.

"Have you read the two volumes of this wretch," he asks D'Argental, "in which he calls Shakespeare the *god of the stage*? He sacrifices all the French without exception to his idol, as pigs were formerly sacrificed to Ceres!"

And Le Tourneur had found the secret of getting the king, the queen, and all the royal family to subscribe for his work! "The blood boils in my old veins," he continued; and, what was frightful to think of, it was himself who had first shown to Frenchmen "the few pearls to be found in that dunghill"! "Little did I foresee that I should serve one day to crush under foot the crowns of Corneille and Racine, in order to adorn with one the brows of a barbarian actor." Under the influence of these feelings, which were shared by D'Argental and all the Voltairean circle in Paris, he wrote a Letter upon Shakespeare to the French Academy, which was read at the session of August 25, 1776. This letter may be pronounced the most blind and perverse criticism ever written by a man of ability. It is worse than Hume's; it is as bad as George III.'s, when he remarked to Fanny Burney that "most of Shakespeare was sad stuff, only one must not say so." In descanting upon "Othello," he says nothing of the wondrous third act, nothing of the sublime fifth, nothing of Desdemona, but translates a portion of the conversation between Brabantio and Iago under the windows of the senator. That conversation is, in its place, and for its purpose, as good as the finest touches of the play; but the reader can easily imagine the effect of the passage as presented by Voltaire to readers accustomed from youth up to the restraints and severities of French tragedy, the heroes of which do not even say, Good-morning, or Farewell.

The error of M. le Tourneur was in sacrificing "the pigs to Ceres." If Shakespeare was right, it does not follow that Racine was wrong. If Shakespeare was the supreme dramatist of all ages, it does not follow that Racine, Corneille, Molière, and Voltaire were not dramatists, to whom was due the grateful homage of their countrymen. It is, nevertheless, much to be regretted that "old men will still be talking," when they say such things as Voltaire said in his letters upon Le Tourneur's Shakespeare. He ends his last epistle to the Academy with a remark upon the quarrel between Thersites and *le bâtard de Priam*, in "Troilus and Cressida." Imagine, gentlemen, "Louis XIV. in his gallery at Versailles, surrounded by his brilliant court. A buffoon [*un Gilles*], covered with patches, pierces the crowd of heroes, of great men, and of beauties who compose that court. He proposes that they shall

abandon Corneille, Racine, and Molière for a mountebank who has some happy sallies and makes contortions! How do you think this offer would have been received?"

The force of perversity can no further go. But, I repeat, very much in the same way the polite classes of England judged Shakespeare for a hundred and fifty years. It was the pit that appreciated him, — the great pit of mighty London, the beloved pit of Hogarth and Lamb: a severe and just judge, bountiful in applause, ruthless in condemnation.

Voltaire, we may hope, was speedily consoled. In the midst of this controversy, which he called his "war with England," a wandering manager fixed his eyes upon a large store-house at Ferney, and induced the lord of that "*drôle* of a half-built city" to fit it up as a theatre. This manager engaged Lekain, Voltaire himself soliciting the actor's leave of absence from the Théâtre-Français; a favor which kings could not always procure. All succeeded beyond hope. The great tragedian played a round of his leading parts with all the fire and feeling of his best Paris nights. "The thirteen cantons have crowded to see him, and have been ravished." Twice the aged poet was unable to attend; which, he said, was enough of itself to prove that he was half dead. He nevertheless pushed on his "war" with sleepless energy, and enlisted D'Alembert, Diderot, Marmontel, and La Harpe in the service. He hoped to gain the young queen to his side, "since she had deigned to renounce Lekain a month in his favor." And while Lekain was still thrilling the thirteen cantons with his rendering of the masterpieces of the French drama came the Marquis de Villeveille, post-haste, from the French Academy to Ferney, to tell the patriarch of literature that his Letter had made a triumphant hit at the public reading of it by D'Alembert, the perpetual secretary of the Academy.

"The marquis," wrote D'Alembert, "proposes to burst some post-horses in order to have the pleasure of being the first to give you an account of your success. It was all that you could desire. Your reflections gave very great pleasure, and were much applauded. The citations from Shakespeare greatly diverted the assembly. They made me repeat several passages, and people of taste listened to the closing portion with particular interest. I need not say that the English who were pres-

ent went away very much discontented, and even some Frenchmen, who, not satisfied with having been beaten on land and sea, would like us to be beaten on the stage also. They resemble the wife of the Médecin Malgré Lui, who said, 'I wish to be beaten, I.' I read you with all the warmth of friendship and all the zeal which the good cause inspires, to which I add even the interest of my little vanity; for I had it much at heart not to see the cannon miss fire which I had undertaken to touch off. I regretted the little omissions which had to be made, in order not to scandalize too much the devotees and the ladies; but the passages which I could venture to read caused great merriment, and contributed much, I hope, to the completeness of the victory."

It required no little firmness on the part of Le Tourneur and his colleagues to go on with their bold and generous enterprise; and it was not till 1782 that the twentieth and last volume of the translation appeared. To this day, indeed, Shakespeare is no more domesticated in France than Racine is with us: the difference of language and form being obstacles that defy removal, even if there were no other hindrances. For one of us to be able to read Racine with French eyes and ears is to be a reader of French picked out of ten thousand. It is all but impossible. To this day, Molière is the only dramatist of France whom many English-speaking readers can enjoy as though he were one of ourselves. He alone is not a foreigner to us.

Voltaire continued his habit of reading and reviewing English books to the last year of his life. Chesterfield's "Letters to his Son" he inclined, upon the first reading, in 1774, to regard as "the best book upon education ever written," and the author of it as "the only Englishman who ever recommended the art of pleasing as the first duty of life." He reviewed Tristram Shandy at some length in 1777, with imperfect appreciation of its merits; not forgetting to mention that the French sense of decency compelled the translator to omit the "form of excommunication used in the church of Rochester!" He was of opinion that the translation of Tristram Shandy would no more be finished than that of Shakespeare. Among other late reviews, there is a long one of a treatise, in three volumes, upon Man, by J. P. Marat, doctor of medicine, not yet styled

Friend of the People ; but Charlotte Corday, nine years of age, was already brooding over Rousseau, whom Marat also extolled with passion in his preposterous work. The Marquis de Chastellux's volumes upon "La Félicité Publique" were also reviewed by Voltaire in 1777, with warm commendation. The author of this work, he said, was not a system-maker who wished to dazzle, nor a charlatan who had his drug to sell, but a well-instructed gentleman who wrote with candor ; "he is Montaigne with method." It seems from these reviews as if he wished, now that his own hand was losing its power, to influence the public mind by telling it what to read ; for these notices are written with so much journalistic tact that each of them must, for the moment, have made or marred the reputation of a book.

Nor was it works of literature alone that interested him. He was still a farmer ; he loved still his cattle, his birds, his bees, his very old horses, and his sheep. Claude Bourgelat, of Lyons, who may justly be called the creator of the veterinary art in France, was now experimenting in the treatment of the diseases of cattle. He published his large work upon the contagious diseases of cattle in 1775, and sent a copy to the farmer of the land of Gex. Voltaire recognized all the merit and dignity of such studies. He wrote to M. Bourgelat, in the course of a long letter, —

"The animals, our *confrères*, deserve at our hands a little more care than they receive, especially since the Lord made a compact with them immediately after the deluge. We treat them, despite that compact, with almost as much inhumanity as the Russians, the Poles, and the monks of Franche-Comté treat their peasants, and as the custom-house clerks treat those who go and buy a handful of salt somewhere else. There is at the present moment a contagious malady in Savoy, a league from my house. My preservative is to have no communication with the infected ; to keep my cattle extremely clean in vast stables, well ventilated, and to give them wholesome food. . . . The greatest misfortune of the peasants is to be imbecile, and another misfortune is to be too much neglected. They are never thought of except when the plague devastates them and their flocks ; but, provided there are pretty opera-girls at Paris, all goes well."

In various ways, he conceded something to his fourscore years. He learned how to grow old. His hours of getting up

and going to bed became more regular. He went to bed about ten, and usually slept until five in the morning. Barbara, his housekeeper, whom he used to call *bonne-Baba*, would then come into his room and bring in his breakfast, which was ordinarily coffee and cream. "Another day, my *bonne-Baba*," he would say, when she appeared. "To-morrow, perhaps, you will be no longer troubled about me. When I shall be out yonder, asleep in my tomb, there will be no more bother of getting my breakfast, nor fear of being scolded." One day, Duvernét adds, after she had brought him his coffee and gone out again, he took it into his head to perfume the coffee from a bottle of rose-water at his side. This mixture immediately produced nausea and palpitation. He rang violently, and *Baba*, terrified, ran to him as fast as she could. "What is the matter, then, *monsieur*?" she cried, on entering. "My good *Baba*," said he, "I am in the agonies of death. I put some rose-water into my coffee, and it is killing me." She replied, "Oh, *monsieur*. with all your *esprit*, you are sillier than your own turkeys." "I know it well, good *Baba*," he replied; "but you, who are a woman of good sense, hinder me from dying!" He was speedily relieved, and the story remained one of the numerous jests of the *château*.

The reader may care to know precisely what he thought upon a question which, at one period or another, interests every thinking creature: "If a man die, shall he live again?" In one of these later years, Frederic-William, Prince Royal of Prussia, nephew and heir presumptive of Frederic, wrote to ask him if he thought the "soul" ceased to exist at death. Voltaire thus replied: —

"MONSEIGNEUR, — The royal family of Prussia has great reason not to be willing that its soul should be annihilated; it has more right than any to immortality.

"It is true that we do not know too well what a soul is; we have never seen one. All that we know is that the Master Eternal of nature has given us the faculty of thinking, and of knowing virtue. It is not demonstrated that this faculty lives after our death; but the contrary is not demonstrated, any more. It can be, doubtless, that God has accorded thought to a monad, which he will make to think after us; nothing is contradictory in this idea.

"In the midst of all the doubts which men have turned, during four

thousand years, in four thousand ways, the surest course is never to do anything against our conscience. With this secret, we enjoy life, and we fear nothing in death.

“It is only charlatans who are certain. We know nothing of first principles. It is truly extravagant to define God, angels, minds, and to know precisely why God formed the world, when we do not know why we move our arms at will.

“Doubt is not a very agreeable state of mind, but certainty is a ridiculous state.

“What revolts us most in the work upon the ‘System of Nature’ (after the method of making eels with flour) is the audacity with which the author decides that there is no God, without so much as trying to prove the impossibility. There is some eloquence in this book, but much more declamation, and no proof. The work is pernicious for princes and for peoples: —

Si Dieu n’existait pas, il faudrait l’inventer.¹

“But all nature cries to us that he exists, that there is a Supreme Intelligence, a power immense, an order admirable, and all teaches us our dependence.

“In our profound ignorance, let us do our best; this is what I think, and what I have always thought, amidst all the miseries and all the follies incident to seventy-seven years of life.

“Your Royal Highness has before you the most beautiful career. I wish you may enjoy it, and I dare predict for you a happiness worthy of you and of your sentiments. I saw you as a child, monseigneur; I came into your chamber when you had the small-pox; I trembled for your life. Monseigneur, your father honored me with his favorable regards; you deign to bestow upon me the same favor. It is the honor of my old age, and a consolation for the ills under which it is ready to succumb. I am, with profound respect, monseigneur,” etc.

The reader will observe that this letter is a perfect specimen of his epistolary method. The conventionalities are gracefully and fully complied with, but nothing is sacrificed to them. The first and last paragraphs are for the prince; but in all the rest it is an old man addressing a young man with simple sincerity. From the general tone of his correspondence and conversation, it is probable that he had no very confident expectation of surviving death, even if he had any at all. One thing appertaining to death he still dreaded, and one only: the shadow of the priest at his bedside, armed with the trivial

¹ If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him.

and deadly implements of his trade. If, at the last hour, he made no concession to the church, he would give it the triumph of excluding his remains from decent burial; if he made the smallest concession, it would be used against the great object of his laborious life, — it would be exaggerated and misunderstood. Foreseeing this dilemma, he had deliberately provided the means of avoiding it: first, by becoming the lord of Ferney, which gave him a certain ascendancy over the curé of the parish; secondly, by making Madame Denis his heir to the seignery; thirdly, by building a tomb for his body close to the church, “neither in it nor out of it,” as he remarked; fourthly, by pensioning the curé. But in his later years he deemed these precautions insufficient. On this subject Wagnière favors us with a curious note: —

“While he was at Ferney he always said to me, ‘*If, when I shall be sick, some priest presents himself, be sure to show him out.*’ And to avoid those ceremonies which serve only to terrify the enfeebled imaginations of sick people, and often to hasten their death, I had hired, in my own name, for him and by his order, a house in Switzerland, four leagues from Ferney, to which he wished to be conveyed, in order to finish his days tranquilly, as soon as he should feel himself to be in danger. He also charged me expressly to have his remains transported thence to Ferney, to be there interred in his bath-house, although he had formerly built a tomb adjoining Ferney church.”¹

These various measures seemed adequate to the case of a lord of Ferney, dying either in his own château, or in Protestant Switzerland. But he was in the land of the living, and apparently capable of remaining in it ten years longer. In 1777, he was still an active, vigilant, and successful man of business, with ships in the Indian seas, with a Duke of Würtemberg paying up his large arrears of interest, with a “city” of Ferney increasing in size and wealth, with a revenue of two hundred and six thousand francs, with farms, flocks, horses, silk-worms, and bees, all managed with ease and efficiency by an hour’s attention to them every day. Considering the whole environment of the man, he had none too much money, and took no undue care of his estate. In his unique circumstances

¹ Longchamp et Wagnière, 161.

he was lost without money, and even without much money. Money was as essential to him as to any other potentate carrying on war, — as essential as those “barrels” of coin which Frederic inherited from his father. He took his losses with the gayety that becomes a man who knows how to replace them. He wrote in January, 1777, to the Marquis de Florian: —

“The Sieur Bérard, captain of our ship Hercules, whom we sent to India, and who returned to Lorient, has gone off with our money, without saying good-by to any one, and has sailed for Bengal instead of paying us. But there is no way of sending a policeman after him upon the high seas, as in the ‘Fourberies de Scapin.’ They say the scoundrel will account with us in five years at the latest, and that we shall not lose, through this mariner of Normandy, more than about ninety per cent.”

There may be seen among the manuscripts of the National Library at Paris a little blank-book of forty-eight leaves, like those which Paris housekeepers still buy for five sous in which to keep the account of their marketing. This book, for which France paid five hundred francs in 1847, was the last account-book used by Voltaire, and contains, among other things, a list of the principal sources of his revenue in the last years of his life. From this catalogue we discover that the Duke of Richelieu, in 1775, was still paying him that annuity of four thousand francs, in which the poet had prudently invested some of his first capital fifty years before. The city of Paris paid him 14,023 francs per annum upon money lent long ago. He drew in 1775 from the India Company of France 11,568 francs a year. Other pleasing items, thirteen in number, swelled the total of his Paris revenues to 78,481 francs. This income the late King of France could have conveniently confiscated, and would have done so if he had not been more governed by his mistresses than by his priests. Voltaire drew besides 62,500 francs a year from the Duke of Würtemberg, 13,000 from the Elector-Palatine, 15,000 from Ferney, and from all these external sources together 106,000 francs. After deducting taxes and costs of collection, his revenue in 1775 amounted to 184,481 francs, and in 1777 to 206,000 francs; about equal, in purchasing power, to the same number of our dollars of 1881.

In the same little yellow book he sums up his probable ex-

penditures in 1775, thus: "Upon which it is necessary to pay, to my nephews, 3,600 francs; for the year's expenses, 40,000; to the curé, 800; in alms, 1,000, — total, 45,400." The book contains also a large number of notes and entries, some of which convey little information to a reader of to-day, though all are written in the clear, small, legible hand of the master. This entry arrests the eye: "Bartered with the girl Wagnière, August, 1777, 109 pounds soap, 155 pounds broken sugar, and 44 pounds oil, for which she paid me in money and loaf sugar."

We observe with pleasure, in the long list of his tenants, the names of some of those "natives" of Geneva who incurred the hostility of the bourgeois and councilors during the troubles ending in the "massacre" of 1770 and their flight to Ferney. Auzière, for one, was paying rapidly for his house, — seven hundred francs at a time. With regard to their Mightinesses of the little republic, he appears to have adopted at length the line of silent feud. They sent him a notice, claiming some trifle of annual charge, in lieu of feudal homage, for a field of his in their domain. He wrote to Florian, "I will certainly make them eat all the hay of that meadow before I pay them an homage-fee for it."

On New Year's day, 1778, when he was past eighty-three, he was a well-preserved and amazingly vigorous old man, a prolific author, the centre of active interests, the animating soul of a numerous and growing community that needed him every day. Doubtless he could have lived to be ninety, a beneficial existence to all who were related to him, if he could but have continued his regular and orderly life at his own house in the country.

CHAPTER XLII.

TO PARIS WITH A NEW PLAY.

A GLEAM of sunshine had fallen upon his path in 1776, which illumined all the rest of his days. In the absence of Marie Corneille and her family, who still chiefly lived at Paris, Madame Denis felt the need of a companion; particularly during the long Alpine winter, when visitors were few. Among their neighbors in the land of Gex was an officer of the king's guard, Rousph de Varicourt, of the ancient nobility of Burgundy, whose rank in the army was equivalent to lieutenant-colonel of cavalry; upon the pay of which he maintained a hungry family of eleven children. The *régime* of the period was convenient for such noble families, as the children whom the king could not provide for found refuge in the church. Voltaire had already besought a benefice for one of the "big boys" of this family, a priest twenty years of age, whom he described as being "one of the handsomest priests in the kingdom, and one of the poorest." We may presume that his application was successful, since this *grand garçon* died, in 1822, Bishop of Orleans. Moreover, it was to a woman of fashion, Madame de Villette, that he entrusted the interests of the young priest.

One of the priest's sisters, Reine-Philiberte de Varicourt, a lovely and amiable girl of sixteen, was destined by her family to an early tomb in a convent. Her occasional visits to Ferney with her parents did not tend to reconcile "the nun," as she was already styled, to her approaching doom; nor did it reconcile the inmates of Ferney to losing forever the charm of her society. Madame Denis became warmly attached to her; Voltaire not less so; and in the winter of 1775-76, they adopted her as a member of their family, and she came to live at the château. She was then eighteen years of age. Freed from the restrictions and anxieties of her old home, she adapted her-

self at once to her new circumstances, and became the life and ornament of the house. Its master, who gave every one about him a name, called her Belle-et-Bonne. She made herself the solace and charm of his existence, enlivening every day, adorning every festival, greeting him with caresses in the morning, and giving brilliancy and gladness to the evening. At the *fête* of St. Francis, celebrated every year at Ferney by the whole colony with great enthusiasm, she shone with engaging lustre, walking in the procession adorned with flowers, and carrying in her hand a basket containing her two pet doves with white wings and rosy beaks, smiling and blushing as she passed.

She loved to wait upon him. He had contrived a hanging-desk over his bed, which he could lower and raise at pleasure, upon which were placed all the means of continuing his work at any hour of day or night. It was her hand that put this apparatus in order at night, and arranged his bed as he liked to have it. She took charge of the minor needs and habits of the old man; while he, on his part, loved to give her lessons in dancing, and to show her how the great ladies of the court paid their homage to the king and queen. On his table he always kept a box with money in it for the poor, and now this store was given in charge to Belle-et-Bonne. "She is," he would say, using a convent expression, "*my sœur du pot*," and she carried the purse of the poor *ex officio*. It was remarked by the household that, in her presence, he was never in ill-humor, and that, in the midst of his demonstrative and harmless anger, if she appeared upon the scene, the tempest was instantly stilled. "You put me on good terms with myself," he would say to her. "I cannot be angry before you." When she entered in the morning, he would say sometimes, "Good-morning, *belle nature!*" as he kissed her forehead. She, apt to catch the humor of the place, would reply, as she kissed his cheeks, "Good-morning, *mon dieu tutélaire!*" He wondered how she could be willing to place her smooth young face against his death's head, and when she repeated the application he would say it was Life and Death embracing.¹ Not the least of her triumphs was that she could be all this to the uncle and retain the lively affection of the niece.

¹ Duvernet, page 435. Paris, 1797.

In the summer of 1777, when Belle-et-Bonne had lived a year and a half at Ferney, arrived, unannounced, from Paris, the Marquis de Villette, a *roué* of that metropolis, aged forty-one, with a revenue of a hundred and twenty thousand francs a year, and a reputation which required not less. He was the son of that Madame de Villette, a frequent visitor at Ferney, whom Voltaire called his butterfly philosopher, and who served him in various ways at Paris. The son, also, had been at Ferney several times, and was a favorite there; for, as Voltaire said of him, he had the amusing talents in such a degree of perfection that he could have cheered the very Calvinists of Geneva. He could sing, play, relate, act, imitate, personate, and compose verses. And now, at the mature age of forty-one, he had run away from a woman and a duel in Paris, *blasé* and discredited, to bestow himself upon Ferney until his affair had blown over. He, too, like so many other gifted young men, on both sides of the Channel, was a victim of *l'Infâme*; since virtue's own sacred self had lost caste through the unworthiness of those who had her in charge. It was fashionable, not odious, to be dissolute, and this young man had followed the fashion.

He saw the new inmate of Ferney on that day of festivity, when she walked garlanded, carrying her white doves. He fell in love with her, and proposed. His hundred and twenty thousand francs per annum were supposed then to be an equivalent to her virtue and youthful loveliness; and there seems to have been no thought to the contrary except in Voltaire's mind. The lover himself, as Wagnière indignantly relates, played fast and loose for three months; but, at length, in the autumn of 1777, at midnight, in Ferney church, the marriage took place. Voltaire, though never married himself, was addicted to match-making, and used to boast that twenty-two marriages had occurred on his estate since his settlement upon the shores of Lake Lemane.

"Our Ferney cottage," he wrote to D'Argental, November 5, 1777, "was not made to keep maidens in. We have mated three: Mademoiselle Corneille, her sister-in-law, Mademoiselle Dupuits, and Mademoiselle de Varicourt, whom M. de Villette takes from us. She has not a farthing, and her husband makes a good bargain. He marries innocence, virtue,

prudence, taste for everything that is good, an unalterable serenity of mind, united with sensibility; the whole adorned with the lustre of youth and beauty."

During the marriage festivities, as well as during the honeymoon, which was spent at Ferney, Voltaire was intent on finishing for the Théâtre-Français his tragedy of "Irène," a work which he retouched, revised, and corrected with all the pains of young ambition. He read it to his new "son-in-law;" he wrote endless letters about it to his guardian angel; he talked it over at dinner. At the last moment, at a suggestion of Villette's, he changed the name of one of his characters from Basile to Léonce, because there was a comic Basile in Beaumarchais's new comedy of the "Barber of Seville," and the coincidence might elicit a ruinous jest from the parquette. "For my part," he wrote at this time, "I try to correct both myself and my works at an age when a man is supposed to be incapable of everything. I believe nothing of that. If at the age of a hundred years I had committed a fault, I should wish to repair it at a hundred and one." He sent a copy of his play to D'Argental in November, and hoped to show the people of Paris that he who had thrilled them with delight when the Duke of Orleans was regent was still capable of giving them pleasure, after the lapse of nearly sixty years. "Be sure," he wrote to D'Argental, "that I have labored upon this work, and am still laboring upon it, only to have an occasion to go to Paris to enjoy, after thirty years of absence, your goodness in always having loved me. That is the veritable *dévoûment* of the piece." To the end of January, 1778, he continued to revise and alter the play with a zeal that never can be other than admirable when excellence in a work of art is the object. It may be, too, that the extraordinary success of Beaumarchais's comedy had revived his taste for the most intoxicating form of literary glory.

The scene of the new tragedy was the ancient palace of Constantine, at Constantinople, and the time was in that turbulent period, from the seventh to the ninth century, when a conspiracy of the palace could give in a day another master to that part of the world. Irène, unwillingly the wife of the reigning emperor, Nicephore, loved Prince Alexis, who returned from brilliant foreign conquest to rise upon the emperor, kill

him, and assume his throne. Horror-stricken, she would not marry the blood-stained hero whom she loved ; her father, the pontiff of the country, supporting her in her virtuous resolution, and providing her an asylum. After five acts of agony and internal conflict, she ends the struggle by suicide. There are in this play several effective "points" and passages ; there are lines and couplets which the author might have written in his prime ; but, taken as a whole, it has a faded-daguerreotype effect, and we can fancy a manager, to whom it should have been sent anonymously, saying, "Very good indeed ; let the young man persevere, but avoid imitating Voltaire."

And so the winter closed in upon the family at Ferney ; the married pair being settled in the château for the holiday season, although possessing at Paris a spacious hotel, all ready for occupancy. They conversed much of Paris, of the new tragedy, of the distribution of parts, of Lekain's objecting to the character assigned him, of the rehearsals, and how inconvenient it was to produce a play in the author's absence. "We form projects," he wrote, November 26th, "with Madame Denis, with M. and Madame de Villette ; we arrange those projects at noon, and we discover all the impossibilities of carrying them out at two o'clock." The whole household were impatient to set out for the metropolis except the master, who wished it and wished it not, wished it at night and dreaded it in the morning. "Don't you know," he would say, "that there are in that city forty thousand fanatics, who, while blessing Heaven, would carry forty thousand fagots to make a fire to burn me ? That would be *my* bed of honor." To which one replied, "But don't you know that you have at Paris eighty thousand friends, who, all running to extinguish the fire, would, if it would amuse you, drown the fagot carriers ?"

He was still reluctant. According to the faithful Wagnière, they began to assure him that the queen, the Count d'Artois, the whole court, and even the king had the greatest desire to see him ; which might have been true in that year of delusion, 1778, when this absolute court was openly committed to the American cause. Lekain, too, being in full quarrel with the chief director of the theatre, made another argument for his going, and they all dwelt much on the danger of failure if the author did not personally direct the rehearsals. They urged

that it belonged to his glory to set right three quarters of Europe, who supposed that he was not permitted to return to the city in which he was born. He consented at last to make the journey, and to stay in Paris long enough to superintend the production of his tragedy.

“It was agreed [says Wagnière] that his niece, with M. and Madame de Villette, should set out first, that all of them should lodge at M. de Villette’s house, and that M. de Voltaire should remain at Paris six weeks only. They started on the 3d of February, 1778, and M. de Voltaire, with myself, on the 5th, at noon, with no other servant but his cook. Ferney was in grief and consternation when M. de Voltaire left it. All the colonists were weeping, and seemed to foresee misfortune. He himself was moved to tears. He promised them that in a month and a half, without fail, he would return to the midst of his children. It is so certain that such was his intention that he did not arrange his affairs at all, and did not put away either the papers relating to his estate, or those relating to literature.

“We meant to sleep at Nantua. Having reached Bourg, in Brescia, while they were changing horses, he was recognized, and in a moment the whole village gathered around the carriage; and M. de Voltaire, in order to be alone, was obliged to lock himself up in a room on the first floor of the house.

“The master of the post-house, seeing that the postilion had harnessed a poor horse, made him put in a better one, and said to him, with a rude oath, ‘Drive fast; burst my horses; I don’t care for them. You are carrying M. de Voltaire.’ These words pleased the spectators, and we set out in the midst of their laughter and cheers. M. de Voltaire himself could not help laughing, although he saw himself at once deprived of the incognito which he had meant to keep during the whole journey.

“We passed the second night at Senecey, and the third at Dijon, where, as soon as he arrived, M. de Voltaire went to see some lawyers and the manager of the suit which he sustained on behalf of Madame Denis. Several persons of the first distinction came to visit him; others gave money to the inn servants to leave the door of his room open. Some even wished to dress themselves like waiters, in order to wait upon him at supper, and by this stratagem to get a sight of him.

“The next day we were going to sleep at Joigny, and expected to arrive on the following day at Paris; but the spring of the carriage broke a league and a half from Moret. A postilion was sent forward to Moret, who found M. de Villette just arrived there. He came back

immediately to take us into his carriage, after which he set out again with his company.

“At length, on the 10th of February, about half past three in the afternoon, we reached Paris. At the gate the clerks asked us if we had anything with us contrary to the king’s orders. ‘By my faith, gentlemen,’ replied M. de Voltaire, ‘I believe there is nothing here contraband except myself.’ I alighted from the carriage, to enable the official to make his examination more easily. One of the guards said to his comrade, ‘This is, *pardieu!* M. de Voltaire.’ He pulled by his coat the clerk who was searching, and repeated to him the same thing, fixing his eyes upon *me!* I could not help laughing. Then all of them, looking at M. de Voltaire with the greatest astonishment mingled with respect, begged him to continue his journey.

“He had enjoyed all the way the best health. I never saw him in a more agreeable humor; his gayety was delightful. His great pleasure was to try to make me drunk, saying that, since I had never taken too much wine, it would perhaps be very pleasant to do so once. He slept in his carriage, which was arranged for reclining. Sometime she read; at other times it was my turn to read; now he amused himself by arguing with me, now in telling me stories fit to make one die laughing.

“Immediately after alighting at the hotel of M. de Villette, he went on foot to the house (near by) of the Count d’Argental, his old friend, who was not at home, and he retired to M. de Villette’s. M. d’Argental arrived a moment after, who saw M. de Voltaire as he was entering the suite of rooms which had been prepared for him. The count ran to him, and, after the first embraces, told him that Lekain was just buried! At this news M. de Voltaire uttered a terrible cry.”

He had traveled three hundred miles to find the great actor dead, upon whom he chiefly relied for the success of his play! To Lekain he had assigned the part of Léonce, the pontiff of Constantinople, and the father of his heroine. Nothing daunted, he read the corrected version of his tragedy that very evening to D’Argental, who was himself an old man then, approaching his seventy-ninth year. Belle-et-Bonne used to relate, fifty years after, how the two aged zealots of the drama sat late that night discussing the new points which the author had made in the last two acts of “*Irène.*” They were fortunate to retain to so late a period an enthusiasm for the noble art which had been the solace of both their lives! “I have left off dying to come and see you,” said Voltaire as he clasped in his arms his friend of sixty years.

The hotel of M. de Villette was near the centre of Paris, on the bank of the Seine, opposite the palace of the Tuileries. It was upon the corner of the Quai des Théatins and the Rue de Beaune. The house is still standing, an object of curiosity to strangers. The street retains its ancient name, Beaune, but that part of the river-front is now called Quai Voltaire. The house of M. d'Argental also faced the river, and was within a few minutes' walk of the Rue de Beaune. Cities which assist the development of civilization have their polite classes gathered into a West End, within reach of one another, thus furnishing to artists a Public capable of alarming, inspiring, and rewarding them, — a Public whose approval is glory and fortune, and gives prestige throughout the world. Old Paris enjoyed this advantage, and hence the people likely to have a personal interest in the new arrival lived within a short distance of the Quai des Théatins.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE EXILE'S WELCOME HOME.

VOLTAIRE in Paris, after an exile of twenty-eight years !

The way had been prepared for him by a series of kindred sensations, and the public mind had never been more susceptible to a generous sentiment. Readers will remember that, in those early weeks of the year 1778, the alliance between France and the United States was about to be completed and proclaimed, to the rapturous joy of both nations, and with the sympathy of all peoples. If the English ambassador lingered still, it was Franklin who represented the English-speaking races ; it was he who moved about Paris, followed by admiring eyes, and cheered as loudly as the young king himself. To the excited Paris of that time Benjamin Franklin was the benignant, venerable embodiment of the ideal citizen, the ideal republican, the ideal philosopher, the ideal grandfather, all characters peculiarly dear to French sentiment. He was humorist also ; his good things circulated in the drawing-rooms. After waiting nearly two years, he and his beloved "Insurgents" were about to be acknowledged as "OUR VERY DEAR GREAT FRIENDS AND ALLIES" !

Voltaire, too, was in Paris ! All the diarists agree that the news of his arrival was electric. Baron Grimm exclaims, "No, the appearance of a phantom, of a ghost, of a prophet, or of an apostle could not have excited more surprise or admiration !" In the course of the first evening the tidings flew from circle to circle, from drawing-room to drawing-room, everywhere arresting and absorbing conversation. The next morning it was known, not merely to that small portion of the people who were commonly styled "all Paris," but to many of that greater multitude who knew Voltaire only as the saviour of the Calas family and the Sirvens. It reached Versailles, where it drew an alarming question from the king:

“Has the order forbidding M. de Voltaire’s return to Paris been annulled?” Upon search no such order was found, and the king said no more; but the question was quickly reported to Voltaire, and struck a chill to his heart. His ancient policy of standing well with the woman who governed the man who governed France protected him once more. He wrote a conciliatory letter to the Countess de Polignac, the queen’s favorite, and she had no difficulty in inducing the queen to keep the king quiet. Madame de Polignac sent him a reassuring reply, and soon after called upon him, with tranquillizing effect, though he still had some apprehensions on the side of the court.

Meanwhile, the tide of visitors had set in, and for many days continued; the passers-by also lingered opposite the house, so that there was a crowd all day upon the quay, waiting for a chance sight of the great man. In dressing-gown, cap, and slippers, he held a continuous reception, stealing away only now and then to note down an idea for “*Irène*,” to change a line, to insert a couplet, or to speak to Wagnière, who was assiduously copying the amended *rôles*. An old man never before gave such an exhibition of readiness, gayety, tact, humor, spirit, understanding, as he did in the midst of this tumult of homage; while his serious thoughts were intent upon his play, his darling “*Irène*,” the child of his old age, his last gift to the art and to the public he had served with loyal devotion from youth to hoary age. During the first day, it is said, more than three hundred persons called upon him, for each of whom, it was remarked, he had the right word, every visitor bearing away his anecdote to add to the *répertoire* of the diner-out.

Father Talleyrand, a gay priest of twenty-four, already benedicted and moving on toward his bishopric of Autun, intrigued for a pretext, and called upon him. At the opposite extreme of character was Turgot, who also hastened to pay his visit, though lame in both feet with gout. He was the man in all France whom Voltaire honored most. Turning to the company, after the first salutations, he said, “When I look upon M. Turgot, I think I see the statue of Nebuchadnezzar.” “Yes,” said Turgot, “the feet of clay.” Upon which, with enchanting vivacity, Voltaire responded, “And the head of gold!

the head of gold!" Turgot's praises were often upon his lips during those days. "I have seen him," says Condorcet, "seize his hands, wet them with his tears, kiss them, despite all M. Turgot's efforts, and say, with a voice broken with emotion, 'Let me kiss that hand which signed the salvation of the people!'"

Dr. Franklin, too, was prompt to present his homage, and brought with him his grandson, then employed as secretary to the embassy. There was the usual crowd present, it appears. After the first greetings, Voltaire began to converse with Franklin in English, according to his custom with English visitors. The spectators drew near, desirous to hear whatever fell from the lips of the two men who were then dearest to the affections of the public. Madame Denis asked them to speak in French, that she and the company might understand them. "I beg your pardon," said he; "I have for a moment yielded to the vanity of showing that I can speak in the language of Franklin." Our philosopher asked him how he liked the constitutions of the United States, and the articles of confederation between them, recently published in Paris by the American envoys. "So well," he replied, "that, if I were only forty years old, I would immediately go and settle in your happy country."¹ Dr. Franklin then presented his grandson, a lad of about seventeen, and asked the old man's benediction upon him. Voltaire, lifting his hands above the young man's head, said, "My child, GOD AND LIBERTY, remember those two words." The company, as Wagnière and others report, were deeply moved, and Voltaire himself not less, for he mentioned the incident in several of his familiar notes of that and the following weeks. A few weeks later, all the American envoys called in form to pay their respects, when they found him in bed and scarcely able to converse. But he quoted a line or two in English from Thomson's "Ode to Liberty," published when he was in London, fifty years before.

We read also, in the American papers of that year, that a medal was struck in honor of Washington at Voltaire's expense, bearing on one side the inscription, "George Washington, Esqr., Commander of the Continental Army in America," and on the other a couplet composed by the poet, —

¹ Connecticut Gazette, September 11, 1778.

“ Washington réunit, par un rare assemblage,
Des talens du guerrier et des vertus du sage.”¹

By a strange chance, Lord Stormont, the ambassador of England, called an hour after Franklin left. The company again remarked the facility and grace with which he adapted his conversation to the varying characters of his guests.

The French Academy, at their first meeting after his arrival, paid him an unusual mark of consideration by appointing a deputation of three of their members, headed by the Prince de Beauvau, to present the congratulations of the Academy, and to request his attendance at its sessions. The company of the Théâtre-Français came in a body to pay their respects. Their spokesman, alluding to the death of Lekain, said to him, “ You see before you what is left of the company.” Mademoiselle Clairon knelt to him. He replied to the compliment of the actors, “ Henceforth, I live only through you and for you.” He gave out the parts of the new tragedy, and appointed a time for the first rehearsal, after which the actors withdrew. When they were gone, he said to one who felicitated him upon the dramatic happiness of the interview, “ Yes, we played comedy very well to one another.” But Wagnière tells us that when they entered upon the rehearsals the scenes did not pass so smoothly. Madame Vestris was not disposed to act the heroine so much according to his fancy as her own, and she pouted at his unrelenting criticism of her delivery. “ Really,” said he one day, “ I need not write verses of six feet, if you persist in swallowing three of them.” Brizart, who played the part of Léonce, the high-priest, is said to have burst into open rebellion, saying, “ For you to tell me how to do a thing is enough to make me not do it so.” But, if he was an exacting manager, he was also a most docile author. After the first rehearsal, he admitted that the fifth act was not yet all that it might be, and, as soon as the house was quiet, he sat down to recast it. The next day Madame Vestris said to him, “ Is it true, monsieur, that you have retouched my part?” “ Madame,” he replied, “ I have labored for you all night as though I were a young man of twenty.”

While the rehearsals continued, the flow of visitors did not

¹ Washington unites, by a rare combination, the talents of the warrior and the virtues of the sage. (Connecticut Gazette, August 28, 1778).

diminish, and the sensation of his presence appeared daily to increase. Some of the ministers called upon him, and others, who could not venture quite so far, sent to inquire after his health. The court ladies, finding they could do so without displeasing the queen, joined the movement. The Duchess de la Vallière, who was too old to go out-of-doors, sent him twelve ribbons for his hair. The Duchess de Cossé called; when he presented to her Belle-et-Bonne, she felicitated him upon having given her a husband. "I felicitate myself also," said he; "for I have made two happy and one wise." Madame Dubarry, who still lived in Paris as a *grande dame*, came one afternoon, long after the proper hour of dressing-gown and slippers. He was much embarrassed, and the reason of his embarrassment throws light upon the manners of the time and country: *he was not dressed to receive so distinguished a beauty!* It was only after much persuasion that he was prevailed upon to show himself to her in undress, and endeavor "to atone for the negligence of his attire by the charms of his conversation."

Madame du Deffand, old as she was, being past eighty-one, another relic of the age of Louis XIV., could not be indifferent to what was passing. She mentions, in one of her letters to Horace Walpole, that, on New Year's day of 1778, she had taken the fancy to dress up Pompon, the little son of her old servant Wiart, as a Capuchin monk, with frock, beard, cord, whip, chaplet, sandals, all complete, and sent him about the quarter to make New Year's calls upon her friends, particularly the Duchess of Choiseul, the Duchess of Grammont, and their immediate circle. In due time, the Duchess of Grammont brought to Madame du Deffand her New-Year's gifts, which consisted of six new volumes of Voltaire and a miniature of Madame du Deffand's favorite dog Ton-Ton. With these presents there was the following stanza:—

" Vous les trouvez tous deux charmants,
 Nous les trouvons tous deux mordants :
 Voilà la ressemblance.
 L'un ne mord que ses ennemis,
 Et l'autre mord tous vos amis,
 Voilà la différence."¹

¹ You find them both charming; we find them both biting: that is the resemblance. One bites only his enemies; the other bites all your friends: that is the difference.

Madame du Deffand, the correspondent of the biting author for half a century, and still a little in fear of that last tooth of his, had scarcely heard of his arrival when she sent him her Wiart with a congratulatory note. He replied the next morning, "I arrive dead; and I wish to rise again only to throw myself at the knees of Madame du Deffand." She was half disposed to go to him at once; but dreading, as she said, to meet at his house "all the histrionic *beaux-esprits*," she deferred doing so until the torrent of visitors had subsided a little. She sent Wiart again the next day to inquire after his health, and she gave the news to Horace Walpole: "Wiart has just come from Voltaire. He saw yesterday more than three hundred people. I shall avoid throwing myself into that crowd. All Parnassus was there, from the mire to the summit. He will not support this fatigue, and he may die before I have seen him."

This was written on Friday, February 12th, his third day in Paris; and on the 14th she paid him her first visit. The letter in which she described it is lost; but, a few days after, she went again, and of this interview she writes:—

"Voltaire came in, saying that he was dead, and could not open his mouth. I wished to leave, but he retained me, and spoke to me of his play, again proposing that I should attend a general rehearsal, to be held in his room, of which he would give me notice. The play is the only object he has in his mind. This it is which made him come to Paris, and it is this which will kill him if it is not a great success; but all conspires to make it succeed. Doubtless he has other expectations,—that of going to Versailles to see the king and the queen; but I doubt if he gets permission.

"He then told the Marquis de Villette to relate to me the visit which he had had from a priest; but as he began telling it awkwardly, Voltaire silenced him, took up the story, and told me that he had received a letter from an abbé, which expressed much joy at his arrival in Paris, and added that he ought not to doubt the warmth of his desire to know such a man as he was. 'At least,' said the abbé, 'accord me permission to come and see you. I have been a priest thirty years; I was with the Jesuits twenty years; I am esteemed and considered by the archbishop; I perform some services; I lend my assistance in various parishes of Paris, and I offer you my aid. Whatever superiority you have over other men, you are mortal like them; you are eighty-four years of age; you can foresee some moments that will be

difficult to pass. I could be useful to you, as I am to the Abbé de l'Attaignant,¹ who is older than you. I am going to dine and drink with him to-day; permit me to come and see you.' Voltaire consented; he has seen him, and is very well satisfied with him. 'That will save,' said he, 'some scandal or some ridicule.'²

Here the old lady was interrupted, and she never completed her narrative. The accommodating abbé whom she mentions appears to have brought his two penitents into correspondence. The gay L'Attaignant sent Voltaire some verses, which he kept by him, waiting for a chance to reply in kind. Madame du Deffand said truly that all Parnassus thronged to the Rue de Beaune, and the gazettes teemed with verses and epigrams, — some of extravagant eulogy, some as biting as his own satire. A considerable number of these effusions have been preserved; it would not be difficult to find fifty of them in the diaries and letters of the period. Some of the poets brought their verses with them; others published them in the gazettes, sent a copy, and then called to receive the acknowledgments they felt to be their due. Le Brun-Pindare adopted this course, and has left an account of his reception by the aged poet, who, as Le Brun truly remarked, was "expiating his successes." He was indeed extremely fatigued, and showed it in his conversation.

"The paternal feeling," added Le Brun, "which he manifested for the young lady whom he had recently established in life really penetrated my soul. The tears rolled from his eyes while he was speaking to us of Belle-et-Bonne, as he named her, and comparing her natural graces with those of Madame Dubarry, who had just left him."

One of the minor poets had not such good fortune as Le Brun. Saint-Ange, after an interview in the cabinet, which was perhaps not very entertaining to the occupant thereof, addressed him thus as he was taking leave: "To-day, monsieur, I have come to see Homer. I shall call another day to see Euripides and Sophocles; afterwards, Tacitus; then, Lucian." He was continuing to enumerate the worthies of antiquity, when Voltaire interrupted him gayly: "Monsieur, I am very old; could you not pay all those visits to-day?" Nor did L. S.

¹ A noted diner-out of Paris, famous for his impromptu songs and repartees.

² 2 *Lettres de la Marquise du Deffand*, 305. Paris, 1864.

Mercier succeed very well with a compliment that had become wearisome by repetition. "You have," said Mercier, "as much surpassed your contemporaries in all ways as you will surpass Fontenelle in the art of living long." Voltaire responded, "Ah, monsieur, Fontenelle was a Norman, and cheated nature." The excellent marine painter, Vernet, on the other hand, was far outdone in compliment. Vernet having styled him one of the immortals, the poet replied, "It is you, rather, who will go to immortality; you use the truest and most durable colors." The modest painter endeavored to respond by kissing his hand. "No," said Voltaire; "if you kiss my hands I shall be obliged to kiss your feet."

Imagine the effect of this tumultuous life upon an old man accustomed for many years to the tranquil routine of a country house and a home farm! For fifteen days there was no diminution of the ferment; and, as the time drew near for the production of "Irène," he redoubled his exertions in declaiming the parts, drilling the actors, changing scenes and situations, as well as in revising plays to follow or accompany the new drama. He had also another tragedy on his hands, "Agathocle," which he had brought, half done, from Ferney, and which he depended upon to follow "Irène," in case of failure, which he began to apprehend with a mortal dread. His health visibly declined. Standing so many hours every day to receive company caused his feet to swell, for he had been accustomed at home to spend most of the working day upon his bed. Other painful and menacing symptoms warned him of the risk he was incurring, and he began to foresee the need of making arrangements in Paris to avoid the indignity of being denied burial. Ferney being five days' laborious journey from Paris, if he were taken sick, he could scarcely hope to be again in a condition to travel so far. He had had visits from several unbeneficed priests, besides the one whose coming he related to Madame du Deffand. One of these Wagnière had had the pleasure of hustling out of the room; but there was another, the Abbé Gaultier, who seemed more tolerable than the rest, and him he had received very politely, as a good-natured simpleton, who would be content with the minimum of concession from a penitent like himself. About February 20th, when he had been ten days in Paris, he consulted

D'Alembert upon the delicate point in question, and in a letter to the King of Prussia D'Alembert mentioned the advice he gave : —

“He asked me,” wrote D'Alembert, “in the course of a confidential conversation, how I should advise him to proceed if, during his stay in Paris, he should happen to fall dangerously ill. My reply was such as every prudent [*sage*] man would have made in my place, that he would do well to conduct himself, in that case, like all the philosophers who had preceded him; among others, like Fontenelle and Montesquieu, who had followed the usage, ‘*and received you know what with much reverence.*’¹ He much approved my reply. ‘I think the same,’ said he to me; ‘for I must not be thrown into the kennel, as I saw poor Lecouvreur.’ He had, I know not why, much aversion to that manner of being interred. I avoided combating this aversion, desiring that, in case we should lose him, all should pass without trouble and without scandal.”²

Fortified thus by the advice of the most eminent of his co-workers, he looked to the Abbé Gaultier, chaplain to the Hospital for the Incurable, as the man upon whom to call in case of need. That unhappy case soon arrived.

February 25th, his fifteenth day at Paris, about noon, as he was dictating in bed to Wagnière, he coughed violently three times, and a moment after cried out, “Oh! oh! I am spitting blood.” The secretary turned toward him, and saw blood bursting from his nose and mouth, “with the same violence,” he says, “as when the faucet is turned of a fountain upon which there is pressure.” Wagnière rang, and Madame Denis came. Dr. Tronchin was sent for. All the household came running in, and the room was soon filled with people. “He ordered me,” says Wagnière, “to write to the Abbé Gaultier, to ask him to come and speak to him, as he said he did not wish to be thrown into the sewers. I avoided sending my letter, not wishing to have it said that M. de Voltaire had shown weakness. I assured him that the abbé could not be found. Then he said to the persons who were in the room, ‘At least, gentlemen, you will be witnesses that I have asked to fulfill what are here called our duties’ [*devoirs.*]”

¹ Quoted from Voltaire's Epistle to the Duke of Sully, written in 1720.

² 25 Œuvres de Frédéric le Grand, 102. Berlin, 1854.

The doctor arrived and bled him; and when the patient had lost about three pints of blood the hæmorrhage diminished, though it did not cease for twenty-two days. Through the violence of his declamation he was supposed to have weakened a blood-vessel, which broke, as described by the secretary. The doctor told him not to utter a word, and begged the people of the house neither to talk to him nor let any one enter his room. He provided also a very competent nurse, and had a surgeon sleep every night in the next room. For three or four days the patient was extremely weak, and sufficiently obedient to the doctor's orders. Very slowly, and with frequent relapses, he gained a little strength. Several of the notes which he wrote and dictated to Dr. Tronchin during his dubious convalescence have been preserved, all of which contain gleams of his wonted gayety and complaisance. An ill-tum, however, induced him to send again for the Abbé Gaultier. Upon his arrival, the patient said to him, "Some days ago I invited you to come and see me for you know what. If you please, we will at once transact that little business." The abbé replied, "Very willingly," and requested all present to leave the room. "The patient wished us to remain," says Wagnière, "but the Abbé Gaultier did not." So they all went out, and left the priest alone with his penitent for an hour. On that morning D'Alembert visited him, and his narrative, as given in his letter to the King of Prussia, is the best source of our information concerning what followed:—

"Finding himself worse than usual on one of the days of his sickness, he bravely took the part of doing what he had agreed upon. During a visit which I paid him in the morning, as he spoke to me with considerable vehemence, and as I begged him to be silent in order not to distress his chest, he said to me, laughing, 'Talk I must, whether I wish it or not; don't you remember that I have to confess? The moment has come, as Henry IV. said, to make the perilous leap; so I have sent for the Abbé Gaultier, and I am waiting for him.' This Abbé Gaultier, sire, is a poor devil of a priest, who, of his own motion and from mere good-will, introduced himself to M. de Voltaire some days before his sickness, and offered him, in case of need, his ecclesiastical services. M. de Voltaire accepted them, because this man appeared to him more moderate and reasonable than three or four other wretched priests [*capelans*], who, without being sent for, and without

any more knowing Voltaire than the Abbé Gaultier, had come to his room to preach to him like fanatics, to announce to him hell and the judgments of God, and whom the old patriarch, from goodness of heart, had not ordered to be thrown out of the window. This Abbé Gaultier arrived, then, was shut up an hour with the sick man, and came out so well satisfied that he wished to go at once to get at the parish church what we call the *bon Dieu*. This the sick man did not wish, 'for the reason,' said he, 'that I am spitting blood, and I might by ill-chance spit out something else.' He gave to this Abbé Gaultier, who asked him for it, a profession of faith, written entirely with his own hand, and by which he declared that he wished to die in the Catholic religion, in which he was born, hoping from the divine mercy that God would deign to pardon all his faults; and added that, if he had ever scandalized the church, he asked pardon from God and from it. He added this last article at the requisition of the priest, 'and,' said he, 'to have peace.' He gave this profession of faith to the Abbé Gaultier in the presence of his family and of those of his friends who were in his chamber; two of whom signed as witnesses at the bottom of the profession."

So far, D'Alembert. The profession of faith, written in Voltaire's own hand, was as follows: —

"I, the undersigned, declare that, having been attacked four days ago by a vomiting of blood, at the age of eighty-four years, and being unable to get to church, the curé of Saint-Sulpice having been willing to add to his good works that of sending to me the Abbé Gaultier, priest, I have confessed to him; and declare further that, if God disposes of me, I die in the Catholic religion, in which I was born, hoping from the divine mercy that he will deign to pardon all my faults, and that if I have ever scandalized the church I ask pardon of God and of it. Signed, VOLTAIRE, March 2, 1778, in the house of the Marquis de Villette, in the presence of the Abbé Mignot, my nephew, and of the Marquis de Villeville, my friend."

Wagnière, being a Protestant, and in extreme ill-humor with the persons surrounding his "dear master," regarded this transaction with such sorrow and indignation that, when Voltaire asked him what was the matter with him, he could not command his voice to reply. Four days before this ceremonial, at a moment when it appeared certain that the patient could not recover, and he felt sure himself that he was dying, Wagnière

begged him to state precisely his "way of thinking." He asked for paper and ink; then wrote, signed, and gave to his secretary the following declaration:—

"I die, adoring God, loving my friends, not hating my enemies, and detesting superstition. February 28, 1778. VOLTAIRE."¹

With this paper in his possession, and having Swiss ideas of the sanctity of the seriously spoken word of a dying man, poor Wagnière was aghast at the tone of the company on this occasion. "When," he says, "the Abbé Gaultier invited us to reënter the room, he said to us, 'M. de Voltaire has given me a little declaration, which does not signify much. I beg you will be so good as to sign it also.'" The Abbé Mignot and the Marquis de Villevielle signed it without hesitation, and without knowing its contents. "The abbé then came to me, and asked me to do the same thing. I refused him. He insisted much. M. de Voltaire observed with surprise the vivacity with which I spoke to the Abbé Gaultier. I replied at last, tired of this persecution, that I neither would nor could sign, as I was a Protestant. He then let me alone. He next proposed to the sick man to give him the communion. He replied, 'Mr. Abbé, observe that I continually spit blood; I must beware of mingling that of the good God with mine.' The confessor did not reply. He was asked to retire, and he went out." Before leaving he received from his penitent a gift of twenty-five louis for "the poor of the parish;" which also was according to polite usage.

For a short time he rested in the belief that he had made all the concessions which "decorum" required. La Harpe came, in the course of the day, to inquire concerning his health on behalf of the Academy, and to inform him that the Academy had voted to obtain and put on record news of his health at every session, as long as his sickness lasted. "Alas," said he, "I have thought that I could not better recognize the goodness of the Academy than by fulfilling my duties as a Christian, in order to be interred in holy ground, and to have the service at the church of the Cordeliers."² He said also to the Abbé Duvernet, "They will not throw me into the

¹ The original is now in the National Library, at Paris.

² At this church a solemn service was held upon the death of an Academician.

kennel, for I have confessed to the Abbé Gaultier." But he was reckoning without the curé of Saint-Sulpice, in whose extensive and wealthy parish he was then living; "a man," says D'Alembert, "of little understanding and a bigoted fanatic." But he was an important personage in Paris, as well from his lineage as from his office. In the course of the day on which this confession was made, the curé called upon the convert, and, though not permitted to enter his room, he left the impression that he was not satisfied with what had occurred. "He seemed vexed," says D'Alembert, "that he had not been sent for rather than a street-corner priest. It was a conversion which he had had at heart to make himself, and which had been impolitely purloined from him by an adventurer." New alarms! It was the parish priest who had the disposal of the dead in his parish! The invalid, March 4th, two days after his confession, wrote to the curé an excessively civil letter, to which the priest replied with equal politeness and at great length.

"I know, monsieur, [concluded the pastor], that you are beneficent. If you permit me to converse with you sometimes, I hope you will agree that, in adopting perfectly the sublime philosophy of the gospel, you can do the greatest good, and add to the glory of having carried the human mind to the highest development attainable, the merit of the sincerest virtue; of which divine wisdom, clothed with our nature, has given us the just idea, and furnished the perfect model, not to be found by us elsewhere. You overwhelm me, monsieur, with the obliging things which you are pleased to say to me, and which I do not merit. It would be beyond my abilities to reply to them by enrolling myself among the number of the men of learning and genius who bear to you, with so much enthusiasm, their tributes and their homage. For my part, I have nothing to offer you except the wish for your solid welfare, and the sincerity of the sentiments with which I have the honor to be your most obedient and humble servant."

Here the affair rested for the time. The news of this "conversion" was a topic in all the circles, and elicited the usual number of jests, in prose and verse. The most noted epigram of the hour was preserved by Madame du Deffand in one of her letters:¹ "Voltaire and l'Attaignant, both of gentle humor, to the same confessor have made the same avowal.

¹ 2 Lettres, 314.

Monsieur Gaultier seems to me to have been well chosen; the honor of two such cures was reserved by good right to the chaplain of the Incurable."

The penitent himself contributed his share to the merriment of the occasion; for all that he said was reported. "It is necessary," he would say, "for a man to die in the religion of his fathers. If I lived upon the banks of the Ganges, I should wish to die with a cow's tail in my hand." And when a gazette was brought to him, filled with satirical verses upon the late events, he said, "At Ferney I receive such stuff every week, and have to pay postage upon it; here, it is sent to me every day, and costs me nothing, which is a much better bargain." Except honest Wagnière, who, being a Protestant and a Swiss, could not be supposed to understand these Catholic subtleties, no one seems to have been shocked at the proceeding. The gravest men about him only thought that he had taken needless trouble; he had gone a little further than was strictly necessary for the accomplishment of the object.

The first performance of "Irène" was appointed for Monday, March 16th, and it could not be conveniently delayed. After these exciting scenes he fell into a kind of languor, which not only prevented his superintendence of the rehearsals, but rendered him indifferent to the play, upon which he had earnestly labored at intervals for two years. He was unwilling to hear the piece spoken of, and left the last rehearsals and the distribution of tickets to his niece and his angel. In four days it was remarked he had grown four years older. So changed was he that when his friends, with a view to rousing him from his torpor, showed him some verses against his tragedy, he gave them back without a word, and without showing any interest.

The rehearsals, meanwhile, continued daily at the house of M. de Villette, presided over by Madame Denis. The tripod, namely, D'Argental, La Harpe, and other intimate advisers, deemed it necessary to make some final alterations in the piece, which obliged the insertion of a considerable number of new lines. La Harpe, remembering, perhaps, the astonishing docility of his master at Ferney some years before, did not hesitate to assist in composing them; nor did Madame Denis and D'Argental refuse consent to their insertion.

The great day arrived, long expected by the public with impatience. Seats had seldom before been sought with such avidity, nor the doors besieged by such a concourse. The whole court was present, with the single exception of the king. The beautiful young queen was there with her ladies; the Duke de Bourbon also, and the Count d'Artois. The audience, in a word, was all that it could be of brilliant and distinguished. The play attained not precisely what the French call a "success of esteem," but rather a success of respect. The cabal, composed of the adherents of the late Fréron, was overwhelmed and nearly silenced by the splendid and compact crowd of the author's admirers. If there was an occasional murmur at a slow scene, there were hearty bursts of applause at every gleam and sparkle of the old fire. The queen was observed to be particularly attentive. She held a pencil in her hand, and seemed to be writing down the verses which struck her most. There was one passage, descriptive of the restraints of royal etiquette, which might have been written expressly for her:—

"Je vois que notre sexe est né pour l'esclavage.
 Sur le trône, en tout temps, ce fut votre partage.
 Ces moments si brillant, si courts, et si trompeurs,
 Qu'on nommait vos beaux jours, étaient de longs malheurs.
 Souverain de nom, vous serviez sous un maître ;
 Et quand vous êtes libre, et que vous devez l'être,
 Le dangereux fardeau de votre dignité
 Vous replonge à l'instant dans la captivité!
 Les usages, les lois, l'opinion publique,
 Le devoir, tout vous tient sous un joug tyrannique."¹

Readers of Madame Campan will recall incidents in the routine of Marie Antoinette's court life that might have suggested these lines. The author of the play had given the pontiff, Léonce, some moving verses upon the awe which religion and its high-priests inspire in untutored minds. "The honors of the prince yield to those of the priest, and hold over mankind a longer and a wider sway. One word, spoken in the

¹ I see that our sex is formed for slavery. Upon the throne, at all times, it was your lot. Those moments, so brilliant, so short, and so deceptive, which were called your beautiful days, were long miseries. Sovereign in name, you served under a master; and now that you are free, and ought to be free, the dangerous burden of your dignity replunges you at once into captivity! Usages, laws, public opinion, duty, all hold you under a tyrannical yoke.

name of heaven and of religion, commands kings, puts into their mouths a sacred rein, which *they champ upon their knees.*"

" Mon cilice, qu'un prince avec dédain contemple,
L'emporte sur sa pourpre, et lui commande au temple."¹

At this passage a jester in the parquette cried out, "It is plain he has been to confession!" which might have been a perilous joke fifty years before. The queen, it was said, took particular care to write down these lines to show the king what a good Christian Voltaire had become. But then, in the next scene, Prince Alexis turns upon the pontiff with some vigorous lines of an opposite tendency: "I will break the altar which you defend, — that altar in all times the rival of the diadem, the fatal instrument of so many passions, loaded by our ancestors with the gold of nations, cemented with their blood, surrounded by the fruits of rapine!" The queen must have chosen her passages with discretion if she desired to present evidence of the poet's sound conversion.

During the performance of the tragedy, the author lay in bed at home, attended only by his nurse and surgeon; for even the faithful Wagnière was at the theatre. He had ceased to be indifferent to the success of his play. At the end of the second act, a messenger was dispatched from the theatre to say to him that all was going as well as possible. At the end of the third and fourth acts, similar messages reached him, though slightly less emphasized. At the close of the piece, M. Dupuits, the husband of Marie Corneille, rushed from the theatre, and ran at full speed, to be the first to tell him that the curtain had fallen amid the warmest acclamations of the whole audience. All the family and all the tripod soon thronged into his room, congratulating him upon this success of his old age. "What you tell me," said he, feebly, "consoles, but does not cure me." Nevertheless, he wished to know what passages, what speeches, what verses, had produced the most effect, and it was evident that the success of the play had given him relief and pleasure.

The excitement, however, came near causing another relapse, and the next day he was not so well. At the second

¹ My hair-shirt, which a prince contemplates with disdain, outranks his purple and commands him in the temple.

representation, the parquette asked for news of the author's health, when one of the actors came forward and said, "The health of M. de Voltaire is not as good as we could desire for your pleasures and our interest." From this time he gained daily in strength, and in a few days his door was once more open to visitors. March 19th, three days after the production of the tragedy, the French Academy sent a deputation of its members to congratulate the veteran upon its success, — a compliment which he returned by dedicating to the Academy the printed edition.

As he regained health, his interest in the play revived in all its force, and he began to look forward eagerly to seeing it himself upon the theatre of his ancient glory. Before doing so, it occurred to him to send for the prompter's copy and the actors' parts, that he might still correct and amend, according to his custom. The manuscripts were brought; he discovered the lines inserted, and a scene ensued that threatened to be tragic indeed. Let the faithful secretary describe the just and natural anger of an artist of sixty years' standing, thus outraged while he lay helpless and unconscious. No one can enter into his feelings or allow for his excessive wrath who does not know how artists work, who has not observed the infinite and tireless solicitude by which alone excellence is even approached.

"He made his niece [says Wagnière] confess that she had consented to the additions. Such was his fury against her, and against the other correctors, that never, during more than twenty-four years that I was attached to him, had I seen him in so violent a state of mind. He roughly pushed away Madame Denis, who, in recoiling, fell into an arm-chair, or rather into the arms of him whom she has since married [M. Duvivier], who happened to be sitting in that arm-chair. When M. de Voltaire was heard approaching the drawing-room, they made M. d'Argental leave it quickly. To him also he directed the bitterest reproaches. No one was willing to name to him the authors of the ridiculous verses which had been inserted in the place of his own. Count d'Argental, who heard him from an adjoining room, reëntered, to try to exculpate himself; but M. de Voltaire treated him harshly before all the company, and asked him to return the amended 'Droit du Seigneur,' 'Agathocle,' and other papers which he had confided to him. He forced Madame Denis, as an accomplice, to go at once and get them at the house of M. d'Argental; to which

she was obliged to go on foot through the rain. That did not serve to revive her affection for her uncle. This effervescence lasted nearly twelve hours. The hæmorrhage of M. de Voltaire continued. I trembled at every moment, expecting to see him fall dead, which would have happened, perhaps, to a young man who should have put himself into such a condition. Nevertheless, no ill consequences followed, and his discharge of blood ceased some days after. I told him the next day, before M. d'Alembert, that, since this adventure had not killed him, it would be necessary, when it was desired that he should die, to knock him down with a club.

"During this drawing-room quarrel, he said, '*Pardieu!* they treat me here as they would not dare to treat even the son of M. Barthe!' He did not know that M. Barthe was in a corner of the room at the moment. As soon as M. de Voltaire had gone out, M. Barthe began to make a terrible noise [*un tapage du diable*]. He absolutely wished to have satisfaction for the imaginary insult which had just been offered him. It took four people to hold him; he could not be calmed. I believed at every moment that M. de Voltaire would have to fight him. Some one went to give an account of the affair to the invalid, who was very much astonished that M. Barthe had heard his remark, and he sent him word that he had never presumed to insult either himself or his son, or his verses, for which he had all the respect they merited. He came, a moment after, to assure him of this in person, when he added, 'If the verses of your son had been corrected as ridiculously as mine have been, would you have suffered it? This is all I meant to say.' The spectators began to laugh, and M. Barthe with the rest, and thus terminated a very amusing tragi-comic scene."

But when the storm subsided, he was filled with contrition at having spoken so harshly to D'Argental, his oldest friend, his guardian angel, his best beloved of living men. He hastened to write to him:—

"Pardon, my dear angel. My head of eighty-four years is really only fifteen; but you must have pity upon a wounded man who cries out, not being able to speak. Think that I am dying; think that, while dying, I have finished '*Irène*,' '*Agathocle*,' the '*Droit du Seigneur*,' and done four acts of '*Atrée*.' Think that Molé [the actor] mutilated me unworthily, foolishly, and insolently; that he is not willing to play his part in the '*Droit du Seigneur*,' etc. I am dead; and yet I must be running about to First Gentleman of the chamber. See if it is not permitted to me to cry out. Nevertheless, I confess that I ought not to have cried out so loud. I am yours, my angel, at every hour."

To De Thibouville, also, he wrote in pathetic terms: "I was in despair; I believed myself despised and abased by friends, the most worthy. The constancy of their goodness heals the horrible wound of my heart, and prevents my dying of chagrin rather than from my loss of blood. Let me have the consolation of seeing you before you go out." He made his peace with the actors, too, one or two of whom appear to have made crude emendations of their own. Madame Denis was easily consoled, so long as there was no prospect of a return to the remote and dismal exile of Ferney. He had then been nearly seven weeks in Paris, and still, to Wagnière's sore distress and disappointment, there was no prospect of a speedy return home. Madame Denis, already much in harmony with her Duvivier, shuddered at the mere thought of going back to Ferney, and all her friends were in league with her to induce her uncle to remain in Paris. So far, he was firm for returning, and Wagnière, whose family were part of the Ferney household, strove by all the means in his power to strengthen him in his wise purpose. Toward the end of March he found himself so much better that he resolved to dress, ride out, see the new parts of his native city, and begin to return the calls with which he had been honored by distinguished ladies. Monday, March 30th, he was to show himself to the public at the theatre, and see his play performed. It was time, he thought, to cast off the invalid, and let the metropolis see how gentlemen comported themselves when Louis XIV. was king.

CHAPTER XLIV.

STIFLED UNDER ROSES.

ON a Sunday morning, toward the end of March, M. de Voltaire was in the drawing-room dressed to go out, and horses were in the court-yard harnessing to a carriage. Fashion had not then become the exacting tyrant she is to-day, and people could dress according to fancies or reminiscences of their own without being suspected of lunacy. But the costume in which he now presented himself was so extraordinary that, it was said, children in the street thought he was attired for a masquerade. He was merely dressed in the showy style of about 1750, when he was last in Paris, and when the luxuriant wig of the previous reign was still in some vogue. In 1778, there was, we are told, only one of those stupendous creations left in Paris, until the arrival of Voltaire added a second. A red cloth coat, lined with some of the ermine sent him from Russia by the Empress Catherine II., hung loosely upon his attenuated figure. That great wig of the *grand monarque*, a torrent of powdered curls, so covered the upper part of his person that little of it was visible except his eyes "shining like carbuncles." Upon this wig was to be lightly placed a square red cap, resembling a crown; and in his hand he carried a little cane with a head of crow's beak. White silk stockings of Ferney manufacture clothed his meagre legs, and he wore the large silver buckles of the time upon his low shoes.

He was in the drawing-room, about half past ten in the morning, waiting for the carriage to be announced, when two visitors arrived. One of these was Longchamp, his secretary and factotum of thirty years before, now a respectable family man and thriving map publisher of Paris; the other was one of Longchamp's customers, a literary personage, whom the map maker had induced to present him to his old master. Longchamp explains that he called at this early hour because he

did not wish to meet Madame Denis, who seldom came down-stairs before noon. He could count upon Voltaire's forgiveness and good-will; but the lady, he felt, would be implacable.

"From the entrance of the drawing-room [says Longchamp] I perceived M. de Voltaire standing, completely dressed, a cane in his hand and his hat under his arm, talking with two men, who were unknown to me. I advanced towards him, trembling. The instant he turned his eyes upon me, he recognized me, and pronounced my name, although he had not seen me for twenty-eight years. This reassured me, and I quickened my pace, with the intention of throwing myself at his feet; but he hindered me from doing this, and kept my hand in his, beginning at once to question me upon my condition and family. I replied as briefly as I could, and I assured him that, if I had had a little success in my labors, I was conscious of owing it only to the early instruction I had received from him, both at Paris and at Cirey, as well as to his former benefactions. He seemed to listen with interest to the few details which I could give him. He spoke then to my guide, and said some very obliging things to him. Ten minutes had scarcely passed, when they came to notify M. de Voltaire that his carriage was ready. We took leave at once. He told us that he was going to see several of his old friends, and that, if we would return another day, he would receive us with pleasure. In descending the stairs I was so much moved with what I had just seen and heard that the tears fell from my eyes. M. de Voltaire appeared to me very much broken, although he seemed to enjoy the full use of his senses, and his voice was very strong."¹

He entered the carriage, and began his round of visits, frequently recognized and saluted by passers-by, occasionally cheered with enthusiasm by a group or a crowd. His name was upon every tongue, and that person was happy who could say, "I have seen him." Wagnière, on this very Sunday morning, told him of a street auctioneer whom he had heard recommending a book of "Tricks with Cards" by claiming the patriarch of Ferney as the inventor of one of them. "Now, gentlemen," cried the vender, "here is a trick which I learned at Ferney from that great man who is making so much noise here, that famous Voltaire, our master in all things!" This anecdote amused him very much.

It may have been on this first round of visits that he ventured to call upon Madame de Gouvernet, whom he had known and loved sixty years before as Mademoiselle Livri, the pretty

¹ 1 Mémoires par Longchamp et Wagnière, 359.

actress trained by him and introduced to the Théâtre-Français. After her marriage to the Marquis de Gouvernet, she had refused to see him, and he wrote the little poem before mentioned, "Les Tu et les Vous;" and, later, he made her a personage of his comedy "L'Écossaise." She was now a widow, past eighty, extremely respectable, and a good Catholic; but she made him welcome in her house, and they conversed agreeably together. He talked to her, as he did to all his friends, of Belle-et-Bonne, the consolation of his old age, and Madame de Gouvernet showed him the portrait of himself which he had given her in the days when they rode and acted and supped merrily together in old Paris gardens. He told her that he should like his Belle-et-Bonne to see the picture, and know how he looked in those far distant days before her father was born. Upon his return home he said, "My friends, I have just passed from one bank of the Coeytus to the other!" The next morning the lady sent the portrait to him as a gift, and he gave it to Madame de Villette, who cherished it as one of her chief possessions during a long life. In this romantic way was preserved for us the only painting of the youthful poet which has either authority or merit. An engraving from it enriches the first volume of this work.

He was punctilious to return every visit he had had from a lady, and the ladies, on their part, were most eager to receive him in their houses. Nor was the conversation always upon the light topics that are supposed to be most suitable for such occasions. In one house, where a number of ladies were present, who all crowded fondly about him, the mistress reproached him for the obstinacy with which he continued to assail the church and its beliefs. "Be moderate and generous," said she, "after the *victory!* What can you fear at present from such adversaries? The fanatics are prostrate [*à terre*]; they can no longer injure; their reign is past." To these words, softly spoken by the lady, herself not long to live, he replied, "You are in error, madame. It is a fire that is covered, not extinguished. Those fanatics, those Tartuffes, are mad dogs. They are muzzled, but they have not lost their teeth. It is true, they bite no more; but, on the first opportunity, if their teeth are not drawn, you will see if they will not bite!"¹

¹ J. Clogenson. Preface to the *Facéties de Voltaire*. 61 *Œuvres de Voltaire*, xi.

The desire to see and to hear about this wonderful old man increased daily, particularly among ladies who had famous *salons*. He was so manifestly the idol of Paris that it became a question with ministers and princes whether it was politic for the court to withhold its countenance from him. The queen, too, was curious to know and converse with him. When it was proposed to assign him an arm-chair at the national theatre, an honor enjoyed by Corneille and Racine, the queen wished him rather to have a box upholstered like her own, and next to hers, that she might converse with him at her ease every evening. The king still had influence enough to prevent this. Hearing the name of Voltaire again pronounced in the queen's boudoir, he said, "Ah, ah, M. de Voltaire! He is in Paris! That is true, but it is without my permission." Some one said, "But, sire, he was never exiled." The king rejoined, "That may be, but I know what I am saying."¹

The royal family, it appears, came at length to a formal resolution with regard to this inconvenient and portentous visitor, whose prestige the court, long the source of prestige in France, could neither diminish nor increase. It is a fact of much interest for students of human nature that Louis Capet and François Arouet should have stood in such a relation to one another, and that, upon the whole, it should have been a just and necessary relation; King Louis being much nearer the average man than his rival, and a truer representative of human nature. If Voltaire had, for the moment, "all Paris" at his chariot wheels, Louis Capet had the human race behind him, — a race governed always through its imagination. It was not, therefore, Voltaire who cut Louis Capet, but Louis Capet who would not know Voltaire. Madame Campan, first *femme* to the queen, says in a well-known passage, —

"There was a grave inconvenience in allowing Paris to pronounce with such transports an opinion so contrary to that of the court. This was hinted to the queen, and it was suggested to her that she ought at least, without according Voltaire the honor of a presentation, to admit him to her drawing-room. She was not very far from following this advice, and appeared embarrassed only as to what she should say to him in case she consented to see him. She was advised to speak

¹ 6 Correspondance secrète, politique, et littéraire, 49. Lettre de Versailles. John Adamson, London.

to him only of the 'Henriade,' 'Mérope,' and 'Zaïre.' The queen said to those who had taken the liberty to make these observations to her that she should further consult persons in whom she had great confidence. The next day she said it was irrevocably decided that Voltaire should see no member of the royal family, his writings being full of principles that made a too direct attack on religion and morals. 'It is strange, nevertheless,' added the queen, in giving her answer, 'that we should refuse to admit Voltaire to our presence as the chief of the philosophical writers, and that Madame de Mouchy should have been willing, as a result of the intrigues of the sect, to present to me, a few years ago, Madame Geoffrin, who owed her celebrity to her title of Nurse of the Philosophers.'"

The court therefore did not recognize his presence at the capital, and contrived, with its usual tact, to extract from his visit the greatest possible amount of odium and contempt.

Monday evening, March 30th, he was to witness "Irène" at the theatre, after having first attended a session of the Academy. A crowd of people filled the two streets, at the corner of which the house of M. de Villette was situated. About four in the afternoon, he came out of the door, wearing the cloak of fine marten fur also given him by Catherine II., and took his place in the carriage; the body of which being blue and covered with stars, a jester in the crowd called it the Car of the Emyrean, — the only word savoring of satire which reached the ears of his friends that day. The multitude, which was so dense that the coachman had great difficulty in getting a passage, gave him cheer upon cheer, and rushed after the carriage in a tumultuous body. A young man, a stranger in the city, was thrown by the crowd upon the shoulders of the patriarch, and got down, covered with powder from his wig, without having had the pleasure of seeing him. The court of the Louvre, where the Academy held its sessions, was already filled with people awaiting his arrival, who received him with cheers and clapping of hands. Even a crowd in Paris, in those days, had its sense of decorum, and shouted "*Vive Monsieur de Voltaire!*"

The Academy paid him the honor of gathering in a body to meet him in their outer hall,—an honor never before conceded to any member, nor even to foreign princes invited to attend its sessions. Of the Forty, there were only twenty-one mem-

bers present, including Voltaire, all the clergy being absent except two abbés, who, it was said, had nothing of their profession except its garb, and nothing to expect either from the court or the church. The patriarch was conducted to the president's chair, and was elected, without a dissentient voice, to the next three months' presidency, a distinction usually decided by lot. The essay of the occasion was a eulogy of Boileau, by D'Alembert. The essayist did not deny himself the pleasure of alluding to their fellow-member, who seemed, by an absence of twenty-eight years, to have become their guest. In discoursing of the early masters of French poetry, he named Boileau, Racine, and Voltaire. "I name the last," said he, "although he is still living; for why should we refuse ourselves the pleasure of seeing in advance a great man in the place to which posterity destines him?" He concluded an elegant passage by comparing the poetry of Boileau, correct, strong, and nervous, to the fine statue of The Gladiator; that of Racine, not less correct, but more marrowy and smooth, to the Venus de Medici; and that of Voltaire, easy, graceful, and always noble, to the Apollo Belvidere. Every allusion to Voltaire in the essay was received with enthusiastic applause, and the poet himself could not conceal his emotion. As soon as the essay was ended the company rose, and followed him to the hall where they had received him.

After a short visit to the office of D'Alembert, the perpetual secretary of the Academy, time pressing, he again entered his carriage, which made its way with increased difficulty to the theatre, where he was met by the Villettes and other friends, anxious to prevent his being crushed by the crowd. The moment the carriage stopped, people climbed upon the box, and even upon the wheels, to get a nearer view. One man, as Wagnière relates, sprang over the others, upon the step, and asked to be permitted to kiss the poet's hand. The man seized, by mistake, the hand of Madame de Villette, and said, after having kissed it, "By my faith, that is a very plump hand for a man of eighty-four!" The women were as excited as the men. As he passed into the theatre through a lane of ladies, very narrow and close, fair hands were thrust from it to snatch hairs from his fur cloak, worn to-day for the first time in public.

Upon his entrance the audience received him with the loudest acclamations. He made his way to the second tier, and entered the box assigned to the gentlemen of the king's chamber, which was directly opposite to that of the king's brother, the Count d'Artois. Madame Denis and Belle-et-Bonne were already seated in the box, and the old man was disposed to hide himself behind them. "To the front! To the front!" cried the parquette; and he took his seat between the ladies, in view of a great part of the house. Another cry was distinguished: "The crown! The crown!" The actor Brizard, a man of grand presence, who was to play Léonce, entered the box, bearing a laurel crown, which he placed upon the poet's head, the audience applauding with the utmost enthusiasm. "Ah, Dieu!" said the patriarch, "you wish, then, to make me die of glory!" He drew the crown from his head with modest haste, and handed it to Belle-et-Bonne; upon which the crowd shouted to her to put it back. She tried to do so. He was unwilling to permit it; he resisted; he refused the homage; until, at length, the Prince de Beauvau, seizing the laurel, fastened it upon the brow of the poet, who saw that the struggle would be useless.

The scene at this moment has perhaps never been paralleled in a theatre. The whole house was upon its feet; the aisles, passages, lobbies, anterooms, all were crowded to suffocation; and even the actors, dressed to begin the play, came out in front of the curtain to join in the glorious tumult. It was observed that several ladies, unable to get a sight of him from their boxes, had ventured even into the parquette, regardless of the usage that usually excluded them. Baron Grimm mentions that he saw people in the parquette under the boxes going down upon their knees, despairing of getting a sight in any other way. The theatre was darkened by the dust caused by the movement of the excited multitude. The delirium lasted more than twenty minutes, and it was only with the greatest difficulty that silence could be restored and the performance begun.

As it was the sixth representation of the play, the audience was able to anticipate the passages most characteristic of the author, which were applauded more with reference to their Voltairean significance than their dramatic merit. When the

curtain fell upon the fifth act, the tumult was renewed, and the author was about to utter a few words expressive of his gratification, when the curtain rose once more, and revealed to the spectators a striking scene. Upon a pedestal in the middle of the stage was the bust of the poet, familiar to the public as a recent addition to the lobby of the theatre. Around it, in a semicircle, the actors and actresses were ranged, each holding a garland of flowers and palm. Behind them were a number of persons who had crowded from the front of the theatre and witnessed the play from the stage, as of old; while at the back were posted the guards who had figured in the piece. This tableau had been hastily arranged, but the effect was pleasing and picturesque. The audience burst into new acclamations. Baron Grimm remarked a fact without precedent in the history of the French theatre, that not one dissentient nor derisive cry was heard amid the shouts of applause. "For once," said he, "envy and hate, fanaticism and intolerance, dared not murmur, except in secret, and, for the first time, perhaps, in France, public opinion was seen enjoying with *éclat* all its empire." Brizard, still wearing his priestly dress, was the first to place upon the bust the wreath which he carried in his hand; prophetic of the time, now not distant, when the class represented by Léonce will recognize Voltaire as their deliverer from a false position. All the company followed his example, to the sound of drums and trumpets, often drowned by the cheers of the spectators.

During this scene, the poet, abashed and confounded, had remained in the back part of his box. When all the crowns had been placed upon the head of the bust, covering it with flowers and palms, M. de Villette, in response to the universal demand of the audience, drew him forward again, and he stood for a moment bending almost to the edge of the box. Then he rose; his eyes filled with tears, and sat by the side of Belle-and-Bonne. Madame Vestris, who had played Irène, advanced to the front of the stage, holding a paper in her hand, from which she read some lines written for the occasion by the Marquis de Saint-Marc:—

" Aux yeux de Paris enchanté,
Reçois en ce jour un hommage
Que confirmera d'âge en âge
Le sévère postérité.

Non, tu n'as pas besoin d'atteindre au noir rivage,
 Pour jouir de l'honneur de l'immortalité.
 Voltaire, reçois la couronne
 Que l'on vient de te présenter.
 Il est beau de la mériter,
 Quand c'est la France qui la donne !"¹

These verses, well delivered by the actress, renewed the transports of the audience, who demanded their repetition. Madame Vestris recited them again. The curtain fell. A few moments after, it rose again for the performance of Voltaire's comedy of "Nanine," during which the bust was visible on one side of the stage. When the curtain fell for the last time, the author rose, and made his slow descent to the street between the same compact lines of ladies, all beaming and radiant with joyous emotion. As soon as he had mounted the carriage, a cry arose for torches, that the whole crowd might see him. There was so much difficulty in starting the vehicle that it was proposed to detach the horses. The coachman, however, at length contrived to begin the journey homeward, moving at a very slow pace, and followed by a multitude of excited people, crying, *Vive Voltaire!* As soon as he had gained his own room, he was relieved by a flood of tears. "If I could have foreseen," said he, "that the people would have committed so many follies, I would not have gone to the theatre."

The next morning he did not appear to be excessively fatigued, and he again received crowds of company, who came to congratulate him upon his triumph.

The queen appeared to emphasize her absence from the theatre on this occasion by driving into Paris, as if she meant to join in the triumph, and then going to the Italian opera instead. She was attended by the Count d'Artois, who was destined, fifty years after, to reign as Charles X., and to ruin the "Restoration" by his blind bigotry. At this period he affected a sympathy with the prevailing enthusiasm, and, as soon as he had waited upon the queen to her box at the opera, he slipped away, and went to the Théâtre-Français. Wagnière

¹ In the sight of enchanted Paris, receive to-day an homage which severe posterity will confirm from age to age. No, you have not need to reach the dark shore in order to enjoy the honor of immortality. Voltaire, receive the crown just presented to you. It is beautiful to merit it when it is France that gives it.

chronicles that he sent the Prince de Henin to Voltaire's box to compliment him on the success of "Irène." "This was the only news," adds the secretary, "which he had from the court, except from the Duke of Orleans, who invited him twice to his private theatre."

"They wish," said the poet, "to stifle me under roses."

It was Wagnière's conviction that these scenes did not make upon his mind the impression that his friends supposed. "On the contrary," he says, "when I spoke to him of them, and expressed my surprise [at his indifference], he replied to me, 'Ah, my friend, you do not know the French; they did as much for the Genevan Jean-Jacques. Several persons even gave a crown to some porters for the privilege of mounting upon their shoulders to see him pass. Afterwards an order was issued for his arrest, and he was obliged to fly!' So, also, when we went out to ride, and he saw the Parisians running after his carriage, he would fall into a bad humor, shorten the ride, and order the coachman to drive us back to the hotel."

His health still improved after he recovered from the fatigue of his triumph at the theatre. Again he was the man of the world, the Parisian, the distinguished author; again he complied gayly and gracefully with whatever his vocation or his celebrity demanded of him. With peculiar ceremonial, accompanied by excellent music, he was admitted, in his character of defender of the friendless, to the order of Freemasons. One evening in April, John Adams, the newly arrived plenipotentiary from the United States, saw him at the theatre, when the play was his own "Alzire." Mr. Adams was in the next box, and saw him to advantage. "Between acts," he records, "the audience called out Voltaire, and clapped and applauded him the whole time. The old poet arose, and bowed respectfully to the audience. He has yet much fire in his eyes and vigor in his countenance, although very old."¹ The scene was indeed only less remarkable than the triumph of the previous month, the applause and acclamations continuing "three quarters of an hour." The admirable performance, too, of a stock piece by actors long used to their parts gave him the most exquisite pleasure, which he testified in his usual emphatic, irrepressible way.

¹ 3 Works of John Adams, 144.

A few days after, Mr. Adams was present on a still more interesting occasion. Voltaire was engaged to attend a session of the Academy of Sciences, of which he was not a member. Dr. Franklin, an honorary member, was also to attend, and the session was expected to be of unexampled interest. The old man felt so strong that morning that he went on foot to the hall, pressing his way through a respectful crowd of admirers. A ludicrous incident occurred on the way. A woman who kept a bookstall pushed through the throng, eating a piece of bread, and said to him confidentially, "My good M. de Voltaire, write some books for me, and my fortune will be made immediately; you have done it for so many other people. Oh, my good sir, please write me some books! I am a poor woman."

Passers-by, seeing the crowd, asked one another what was the cause of it. "It is M. de Voltaire," said some; "he who saved the families of Calas and Sirven." So reports Wagnière.

At the hall of the Academy all was effusion and enthusiasm. As Mr. Adams records in his Diary, there arose a general cry in the assembly that Voltaire and Franklin should be introduced. This was done; they bowed and spoke to each other. But the audience, not satisfied, clamored for something more. Then they shook hands. But the outcry continued, until, at last, words were distinguished: "*Embrace in the French manner!*" The philosopher and the poet embraced and kissed each other's cheeks. The tumult then subsided, and, as Mr. Adams observes, "the cry immediately spread through the whole kingdom, 'How charming it was to see Solon and Sophocles embrace!'"¹

With all this, he was soon in the full tide of literary work: amending "*Irène*," proceeding with "*Agathoele*," correcting old comedies, commenting upon (as D'Alembert mentions) the Prophecies of Daniel, and laying out work for the Academy, over which he was now to preside; toiling with all the vivacity of his prime, as though the best of his career lay still before him. His new tragedy, "*Agathoele*," he relied upon to efface the recollection of "*Irène's*" imperfect success. As late as April 20th, we see him writing to D'Argental upon that unfinished drama precisely in the tone and manner of forty years before,

¹ 3 Works of John Adams, 147.

when he had a "Mérope," a "Zaïre," or an "Alzire" upon his hands.

"I believe," he wrote April 20th, "that La Rive and Molé will play well the children of Agathocle, that Idasan suits Monvel very well, that the white locks and the voice of Brizart will suffice for Agathoole, and that the role of Idace is much more in the character of Madame Vestris than that of Irène, provided she will lessen the enormous multitude of her gestures. In a word, it seems to me that 'Agathocle' will be much better played than 'Irène;' with which 'Irène' I am very cruelly dissatisfied. I throw myself into the arms of my dear angel for my consolation. I ask only two representations of 'Irène' at the reopening of the theatre (after Lent), in order to equal the glory of M. Barthe. I must start in fifteen days, without which all perishes at Ferney. I hope in the month of September to go out no more from under the wings of my angel."

Yes; he had yielded to the party of his friends who claimed him for Paris. Those triumphal scenes at the theatre, at the two Academies, and in the streets, whatever philosophy might say of them, could not but influence, and even, at times, deceive and bewilder, the most susceptible of human beings, now past eighty-three, and not yet recovered from a severe malady. Nor could they fail to strengthen the argument of those who were urging him to remain. What was there for him now at Ferney? Belle-et-Bonne, married to a spoiled child of Paris, could henceforth be only an occasional visitor there; and his niece, torn from everything she loved and liked, would be an uncomfortable companion in a country house. His desire to return home was very strong; but, after his coronation at the theatre, he wavered more and more. He would, and he would not. The old man longed for the quiet and repose of his home, but the poet, the artist, the Academician, the man of the world, the lord of opinion, leaned toward his metropolis; and all who surrounded him seem to have been eager for his stay, except Wagnière, D'Alembert, Dr. Tronchin, and Dupuits. The Paris party, as Wagnière reports, endeavored to convince him that his Ferney watchmakers would be ungrateful to their benefactor, and loved him not.

"But [says the secretary], when his own coachman came from Fer-

ney to Paris, he brought with him a beautiful dog of mine that M. de Voltaire was very fond of. This dog, on arriving at Paris, made him astonishing caresses. In the evening he had him up-stairs, and the animal, on entering, ran up to him and caressed him. 'Well,' said he, 'you see, however, that I am still beloved at Ferney.' At the same time the tears rolled from his eyes. From that moment the dog was not permitted to come into the house. Another proof of his desire to return, beside what he said to me, was a note which he wrote with his own hand to my wife, March 26th, conceived in these terms:—

“‘MY DEAR MADAME WAGNIÈRE, — Your letter has touched me sensibly. I thank you for all your pains. I have had two mortal maladies at eighty-four, and I hope, nevertheless, to see you again at Easter (April 18). I embrace you with all my heart, — you and Mimi. VOLTAIRE.’

“These advisers succeeded one another. When he appeared shaken, they were at the summit of joy. Two hours after, he would persist in wishing to set out; when all the cabal would come together, and hold frequent counsel to devise the means of retaining him. I was alone against them all in soliciting him to go home. They perceived that it was I who supported him in his wish to return to his tranquil retreat, and they resolved at any cost to separate me from this worthy old man, who had reared me, and been as a father to me, and to whom I had been attached so long. M. Tronchin alone had the courageous friendship to speak to him with truth. He said to him these very words: ‘I would give at this moment a hundred louis to get you to Ferney. You have too much intelligence not to feel that a tree eighty-four years old is not transplanted unless it is desired to kill it. Start in eight days; I have an excellent traveling-carriage in readiness at your service.’ ‘Am I in a condition to set out?’ asked M. de Voltaire. ‘Yes; I answer for it with my head,’ replied M. Tronchin. M. de Voltaire took his hand, and said to him, ‘My friend, you give me back my life.’ He was so moved that his cook, who was present, was obliged, as well as myself, to go out of the room to hide our feelings.

“A moment after, M. Dupuits, husband of Marie Cornelle, came to see him, who spoke to him with the same frankness as M. Tronchin, and with the same friendship. M. de Voltaire begged him to go and see the traveling-carriage of which M. Tronchin had spoken. It was then that he ordered me to write to Ferney for his coachman to come instantly, with his own carriage. Madame Denis, having heard of this conversation with M. Tronchin, scolded him much for it, and never forgave him. The more this old man showed a desire to leave,

the more they redoubled their efforts to retain him. They told him that he had only to send me to Ferney, as I knew his affairs as well as he did himself. 'Yes,' said he, 'I know that Wagnière is an honest man; he is my consolation, and I regard him as my brother; but it is absolutely necessary that I should return.' 'Why, uncle?' 'Because I adore the country; because it preserves my life. Remain here to amuse yourself, you who detest the country.' 'Who told you that, uncle?' 'My experience,' he replied. He spoke with great vivacity and a severe tone. She consented to remain at Paris, and left the room in despair.

"Nevertheless, reflecting that it would not be becoming in her thus to abandon, for her own pleasure, this great man, to whom she owed everything, and that she would doubtless be obliged immediately to rejoin him, she and her friends again proposed to him to procure a country-house near Paris, or in Paris itself. Several were suggested to him, and, at last, a very pretty one in the Rue de Richelieu, of which there were yet constructed only the walls and a grand staircase. It pleased him; he wished to have it finished, so that his niece could live there."

A kind of compromise had been made between his niece and himself, as also between the old man and the celebrated author. He agreed to buy the house in the Rue de Richelieu for his own life and that of his niece, with the intention to live in it eight months of the year, and to pass the four summer months at Ferney. Meanwhile, he would return to Ferney for a few weeks, and had fixed the day for his departure. According to Wagnière, who regarded this arrangement with extreme repugnance, the scheme was defeated by a stratagem of the Denis party. An influential friend of the lady wrote her a note, warning her that, if her uncle should return to his château, the court was prepared to issue an order forbidding forever his return to Paris. "I have held in my hand," says Wagnière, "this infernal note, filled with the most horrible falsehood, which I found crumpled in the ashes of the fireplace in Madame Denis's room, and I call it my unfortunate master's sentence of death."

It is not so clear, however, that the warning was without foundation. On the contrary, it is highly probable that the hierarchy would have found means to prevent his return to Paris. The late events at the theatre and elsewhere had roused some of the popular preachers of Paris to renew their denun-

ciations of "philosophy" from the pulpit. The Abbé de Beauregard was still the preacher at Versailles, — he who had of late distinguished himself above all others by his glowing vituperation in the cathedral of Notre Dame.

"Yes!" cried he, in one of his most celebrated sermons of this period, — "yes! it is against kings and against religion that the philosophers direct their blows! The hatchet and the hammer are in their hands; they await but the favorable moment to overturn the throne and the altar. Yes! thy temples, Lord, will be despoiled and destroyed, thy festivals abolished, thy name blasphemed, thy worship proscribed, and thy ministers massacred! But what do I hear? Great God, what do I see? Instead of the holy psalms, with which the sacred temples resound in thy honor, are heard songs shameful and profane. And you, infamous divinity of paganism, shameless Venus, you come here to take audaciously the place of the living God, to seat yourself upon the throne of the holy of holies, and receive the guilty incense of your new adorers!"

Such melodious inanity, uttered by a voice selected for its thrilling power from the whole priesthood of France, has its effect upon a compact mass of credulous and timid worshipers, under the lofty roof of a vast cathedral. This sermon was delivered at Notre Dame some time before Voltaire's return; but, on Palm Sunday, thirteen days after the crowning of the poet at the theatre, the same Abbé de Beauregard preached in the royal chapel at Versailles, when he made a pointed allusion to the coronation. Again he said, with equal art and vehemence, that the works of the philosophers were so many attacks upon God, kings, *and* morality, and tended to destroy all government *and* all belief. "Yet," said he, "these productions were imprudently allowed, and, instead of just repression, they bring to their authors CROWNS!" "We are accused of intolerance," said the abbé. "Ah! do they not know that charity has its furies, and zeal its revenges?"

The courtiers, we are assured, smiled at these foolish utterances, and Voltaire for the moment could parry the attack by a jest. "The Abbé de Beauregard," said he, "would gladly refuse to bury me, which is very unjust, for it is said that I would ask nothing better than to bury *him*; and I think he owes me the same politeness." This made "Paris" laugh, as

it went the rounds of the supper-tables; but the priest not the less had the ear of the people, and the king, ignorant and timid, was one of the people.

Alarmed by these intimations from the court, which were confirmed by the Duke de Praslin in conversation, Voltaire decided to remain for the present at Paris, and send Wagnière to Ferney to gather up his papers, and bring him the books requisite for his various literary projects. It was long before he could communicate this intention to his secretary, and did it at last with sobs and tears.

“On the following day [continues Wagnière] he gave me all his orders in writing, and a power of attorney to act for him, and I had my place taken in the Lyons diligence, where I was to get some money to send him. April 29th, I being alone with him, he turned sadly towards me, stretched out his arms, and said, ‘My friend, it is, then, the day after to-morrow that we are to separate! That has not happened to us before in twenty-four years. I count upon your friendship and your prompt return.’ He cried like a child while saying these words, and I was moved not less. The next day, at five o’clock in the afternoon, he went with Madame Denis to his notary’s to sign the contract for the acquisition of the house in the Rue de Richelieu. He remained only half an hour, and left his niece there. On alighting from his carriage, he threw himself upon me like a desperate man who has the presentiment of a great misfortune. He said to me, ‘Ah, my friend, I have just bought a house, and I have acquired only my tomb!’ Having ascended to his chamber, he threw himself into an arm-chair apparently overwhelmed with the acutest grief. He told me that he wished to go with me himself at midnight to the starting-place of the diligence. I opposed this resolution with all my force, and soon after he fell asleep. I went out to finish packing. He slept till half past ten in the evening, when he rang, and, supposing that I had gone to bed, he sent his cook to say good-by, and to wish me a pleasant journey and a quick return. I entered at that moment, and threw myself into his arms. He held me a long time in his embrace, without either of us being able to utter a word. At last I said to him, ‘I hope, my dear master, soon to see you again in good health.’ He replied, ‘Alas, my friend, I wish to live for the sake of seeing you again, and to die in your arms.’ I then tore myself from him, and went away without being able to say anything more, so full was I of trouble and agitation.

“Such were the last words I heard pronounced by that great man, that extraordinary being, so virtuous and good, my dear master, my

father, my friend, whom a fatal destiny did not permit me to see again, and whom I mourn every day. I sent him at Lyons eighty thousand francs from his banker there, and twenty thousand from another source. I deposited also with his banker at Lyons sixteen hundred louis, which I found at Ferney."

Meanwhile, the patriarch had entered upon his three months' term of service as president or *directeur* of the French Academy. He presided on Monday, April 27th, when a conversation arose upon a translation of Pope's "Epistle to Arbutnot," which the Abbé Delille, the translator, read that day to the Academy. Pope was a name he could never hear with indifference, and this translation revived all his interest in the English poet and his works. After complimenting the translation, he spoke of the comparative poverty of the French language, particularly for poets' use, and said that there was great need to enrich it with new words, as well as to retain all its happy and energetic phrases. "Why," said he, "should we not call an actor who plays tragic parts a *tragédien*? Our language is a proud beggar; it is necessary to give her alms against her will." He then proposed that the Academy should undertake the reconstruction of the French Dictionary, dividing the labor equitably among the members; each undertaking one letter of the alphabet, or more, and giving the whole to the public in the name and on the authority of the Academy. The dictionary then in use, he said, was inadequate, without interest, without dignity, without philosophy; it was a reproach to the Academy, which he regarded as the lawgiver of language to the French people. He spoke with a warmth and continuance which astonished every hearer, and alarmed his friends.

He made a strong impression upon his colleagues; but he found several of them indisposed to so serious a labor, and nothing was concluded at this session. Many members, indeed, had not the knowledge requisite for their share of such a work. An anecdote is related which illustrates the fact. When the learned Beauzée was admitted to the Academy, in 1772, a friend asked him by what miracle he had obtained the suffrages of a coterie of atheists. The new member replied, "I have just asked the same question of D'Alembert. Finding that I was almost the only one at our sessions who believed in

God, I said to D'Alembert one day, 'How came you to think of electing *me*, whom you knew to be so far from agreeing with you and your colleagues in opinion?' D'Alembert hesitated, and then answered, 'I don't wonder you ask. In truth, we needed a grammarian. We knew that you believed in God, but knowing also that you were a very good man, we thought of electing you, notwithstanding your want of a philosophy which could complete your excellent character.'"

The zeal of Voltaire proved, however, to be irresistible. At the meeting of the 7th of May he produced in his own handwriting a scheme of a dictionary, such as has been followed in all the great works of that nature since executed in Europe and America. The following was his plan:—

"It has been unanimously resolved, that we shall labor without delay upon a new dictionary, which shall contain,—

"The recognized etymology of each word, and, sometimes, the probable etymology;

"The conjugation of the irregular verbs, which are little in use;

"The various significations of each term, with the examples drawn from the most approved authors, as, *Il lui fut donné de prevaloir contre les rois. Cette île plus orageuse que la mer qui l'environne. Point de campagne où la main diligente du laboureur ne fut imprimée, etc.*;¹

"All the picturesque and energetic expressions of Montaigne, of Amiot, of Charron, which it is desirable to revive, and upon which our neighbors have seized.

"By avoiding dullness upon each of those subjects, but treating suitably all of them, we can produce a work which will be as agreeable as it is necessary. It would be at once a grammar, a rhetoric, and a collection of poetry, without the ambition to pretend to it.

"Each Academician can undertake one letter of the alphabet, and even two.

"The Academy will examine the work of each of its members, and make in it the suitable changes, additions, and retrenchments.

"Mr. — has undertaken the Letter A.

"Mr. — " " " " B.

"Mr. — " " " " C," etc.²

After recommending the plan with all his energy, he ob-

¹ It was given him to prevail against kings. That isle more stormy than the sea which surrounds it. No country where the diligent hand of the husbandman had not imprinted, etc.

² 2 Longchamp et Wagnière, 540.

tained for it a unanimous, if reluctant consent. This did not satisfy him. He insisted that they should divide at once among them the twenty-four letters of the alphabet, and undertook for his own part the letter A, as being the most laborious. An old member ventured to remind him of his age; but he rejected the intimation with something more than vivacity. After a long and exciting session, he succeeded upon every point, and had the satisfaction of seeing the letters both distributed and accepted. In the highest elation, he said to his colleagues, as he rose from his chair to take leave of them, "Gentlemen, I thank you in the name of the alphabet." To this the Chevalier de Chastellux happily replied, "And we thank you in the name of letters."

CHAPTER XLV.

DEATH.

HIS work was done. This generous scheme of a national dictionary, since so ably carried out in France, in the United States, and elsewhere, was not the least of his services to civilization, and it was his last.

He was aware that the Academy had given a languid consent to his project, and he could not quite avoid the reflection that a man of eighty-three was not certain to witness its completion. He therefore set about preparing an elaborate discourse upon the subject, to read to the Academy, that should convince the skeptical and rouse the lethargic; an essay which, by exhibiting all the charms and utilities of such a work, could prevent, in any case, its abandonment. In his literary career of sixty-five years he had put the French language to every strain of which it is capable, from epigram to tragedy, from the easiest narrative to the newest science; he knew it in its strength and its weakness, its wealth and its poverty; he knew it as no other man has ever known any language. He had a particular taste for the niceties and devices of human speech, and, like every good artist, loved the tools he worked with. He had a considerable familiarity with Latin, English, Italian, and Spanish, as well as some Greek and a little position's German. As to his mastery of French, a bird is not more at home in its feathers, nor a snake in its skin; his French is limpid, lucid perfection.

Hence, when he sat down to get upon paper the thousand things that came rushing into his mind upon language (in the absence, too, of his familiar, helpful Wagnière), the day was not long enough, and his strength was gone before he had appeased his craving to accomplish. He resorted then to the most destructive of all stimulants to jaded nerves, — a stimulant more deadly than alcohol to a spent student. In the

course of a long evening, following a day of toil, he drank much coffee. He kept at his task until late at night, and drank in all "ten or twelve cups of coffee." When, at last, he went to bed, he could not sleep, and he never again enjoyed a sleep that was natural. The coffee aggravated his *strangurie*, which gave him at times acute pain, and induced a feverish condition. This was toward the middle of May. The special session of the Academy, appointed to arrange further details of the new scheme, was postponed on account of his indisposition, and again postponed. He was still able to get about, and even to walk out, no one supposing that his symptoms were of a serious nature. Had he not been an invalid always? Had he not at eighty-three recovered from a broken blood-vessel?

His pen was not yet quite at rest. His last epigram was probably written just after this attack. His former guest and *protégé*, Grétry, had produced his opera of "Midas" first at court, where it failed; and three weeks after, in May, 1778, it was performed at Paris, where it succeeded. Upon this, Voltaire wrote: —

"La cour a dénigré tes chants,
Dont Paris a dit des merveilles.
Hélas! les oreilles des grands
Sont souvent de grandes oreilles."¹

His poetic response to the verses of the Abbé Attaignant bears date May 16th, which was four or five days after his excess with coffee. These are certainly the last verses he ever composed: —

TO THE ABBÉ DE L'ATTAIGNANT.

Paris, May 16, 1778.

L'Attaignant chanta les belles;
Il trouva peu de cruelles,
Car il sut plaire comme elles.
Aujourd'hui plus généreux,
Il fait de chansons nouvelles
Pour un vieillard malheureux.

Je supporte avec constance
Ma longue et triste souffrance,
Sans l'erreur de l'espérance;

¹ The court has reviled thy songs, of which Paris has said marvelous things. Alas! the ears of the great are often long ears.

Mais vos vers m'ont consolé ;
C'est la seul jouissance
De mon esprit accablé.¹

He added in prose, " I can go no further, monsieur. M. Tronchin, witness of the wretched condition in which I am, would find it too strange that I should reply in bad verses to your charming couplets. The mind, moreover, is affected too much by the torments of the body ; but the heart of old Voltaire is full of your goodness."

Dr. Tronchin had not been summoned at first ; partly, perhaps, because the patient was ashamed to face a physician whose prescriptions and whose known system he had so flagrantly violated. One day, while he was suffering extreme pain, the Duke de Richelieu mentioned that he had himself experienced relief from the anguish of the gout by taking an elixir of which laudanum was the chief ingredient. He procured something of the kind ; and, as was all but inevitable, he took too much of it, and thus brought on one of the most distressing conditions of the body. Our physicians familiarly call this " the opium sickness ;" the chief symptom of which is the most miserable nausea, that destroys appetite, prevents the patient from taking his pain-quelling elixir, and reduces him to despair. It is impossible to overstate the desolating misery of this malady in such a case as this, where there is a grinding pain latent in the body, certain to awake and resume the torments of the patient the moment his opiate begins to lose its power. At that period, too, the preparations of opium were cruder than the crudest now in use ; and it appears that the elixir first taken by the sufferer was bought at hazard at an apothecary's.

When, therefore, Dr. Tronchin was at length summoned, he found his patient in a deplorable condition both of body and mind. He was bitterly ashamed of what he had done. He could not forgive himself, nor patiently endure the consequences of his imprudence. He was passionately contrite. He could not apologize enough to this hard, cold, uncompromising

¹ L'Attaignant sang the belles. He found few cruel, for he knew how to please, like them. To-day, more generous, he writes new songs for an unhappy old man.

I support with constancy my long and sad sufferings without the delusion of hope ; but your verses have consoled me ; it is the only enjoyment of my overwhelmed spirit.

Swiss physician for giving him so much needless trouble; he owned again and again that if he had followed his advice all had been well with him. In Paris there could scarcely have been found a person less capable than Dr. Tronchin of pardoning the admirable folly of this gifted man, whose very madness was wiser than Tronchinian wisdom. The doctor wrote, a few weeks after, to a friend in Geneva, a brief, unsympathizing account of these scenes: —

“I always spoke the truth to him, and, unfortunately for him, I was the only one who never deceived him. ‘Yes, my friend,’ he often said to me, ‘you alone have given me good advice. If I had followed it I should not be in the frightful condition in which I am; I should have returned to Ferney; I should not have inhaled the intoxicating fumes that turned my head. Yes, I swallowed nothing but smoke. You can be of no more use to me; send me the madmen’s doctor. By what fatality did I come to Paris? You told me when I arrived that an oak eighty-four years old could not be transplanted, and you spoke the truth. Why did I not believe you? And when I gave you my word of honor that I would set out in the carriage which you procured for me, why did I not go? Have pity on me; I am mad [*fou*].’ He had intended to leave the next day but one after the follies of his coronation at the Comédie-Française; but he received a deputation from the French Academy, who entreated him, before he left Paris, to honor the Academy with his presence. . . . From that moment his days were only a whirlwind of follies. He was ashamed of them. When he saw me he asked my pardon; he clasped my hands; he prayed me to pity him, and not abandon him, especially because he had to make new efforts in order to respond to the honor which the Academy had done him in engaging him to labor upon a new dictionary. The making of this dictionary was his last dominant idea, his last passion. He had taken upon himself the letter A, and had distributed the twenty-three others among twenty-three Academicians; several of whom, by accepting unwillingly, had singularly irritated him. ‘They are sluggards,’ he would say, ‘accustomed to wallow in idleness; but I will make them march!’ And it was in the effort to make them march, during the interval between the two sessions, that he took at hap-hazard so many drugs, and committed all the follies that hastened his death and threw him into the most frightful state of despair and madness.”¹

Days passed. There could be no material change for the

¹ Tronchin to Bonnet. Manuscript letters in Library of Geneva. Quoted by G. Desnoiresterres in Voltaire, son Retour et sa Mort, page 365.

better, for he could take no nourishment; but, as he grew weaker, he became quieter, and had short intervals of ease and reason. May 25th, Nephew d'Hornoy, in writing to Wagnière to urge his instant return, described his condition: "The effect of the opium is passed; but it has left cruel symptoms. The debility is extreme; he has a fearful repugnance to whatever could sustain and restore him; he will not even take broth. All that we can do, by entreaties, by supplications, and even by alarming him upon his condition, is to make him swallow some spoonfuls of jelly and blanc-mange. So his feebleness increases, and it is frightful. He desires you intensely. I do so not less. He charges me to write to you, to entreat you to return."

The next day, May 26th, the Abbé d'Hornoy wrote again for Wagnière, addressing his letter to the secretary's wife: "The weakness increases from day to day. The impossibility of making my unhappy uncle take nourishment still continues. It would be to deceive ourselves to hope any more. . . . What remains to him of head is spent in desiring you."

On this day he had a gleam of reason and a brief return of mental power. For a few minutes, we may even say, he was himself again. He received a letter from the son of that General de Lally who was beheaded twelve years before for alleged treason in India. The young Count de Lally, with Voltaire's tireless, skillful aid, had spent laborious years in vindicating his father's memory, and in getting the foul decree annulled which had condemned a faithful soldier to a traitor's death. This day, May 26, 1778, saw his pious efforts crowned with the most complete success; and he sent word instantly to the Rue de Beaune that the king in council had broken the decree, thus transferring the odium of it from the victim to the judges, and restoring to all its purity and lustre his father's name. The glad tidings awoke the invalid's dormant intelligence. He sat up in bed; the old light shone again in his eyes; and he dictated a few lines to the count, which proved to be the last he ever composed: —

"May 26th. The dying man revives on learning this great news; he embraces very tenderly M. de Lally; he sees that the king is the defender of justice; he will die content."

He then, as La Harpe records, told some one to write the

news in large hand upon a piece of paper, and pin it to the tapestry in a conspicuous place, so that every one coming in could see it. The paper read thus: —

“ON THE 26TH OF MAY THE JUDICIAL ASSASSINATION, COMMITTED BY PASQUIER (COUNSELOR TO THE PARLIAMENT) UPON THE PERSON OF LALLY, WAS AVENGED BY THE KING’S COUNCIL.”¹

He soon relapsed, and during the following days he lay quiet, and appeared to suffer little pain. He recognized some of his old friends when they came near his bedside or spoke to him. “I visited him when he was in this condition,” says D’Alembert, “and he always knew me. He even used some expressions of friendship; but, immediately after, would fall again into his stupor, for he was in a continual slumber. He awoke only to complain, and to say that he had come to Paris to die.”

Two days after the incident of the Count de Lally, the Abbé Mignot, who was a considerable personage, a member of the Grand Council, as well as the titular and beneficed head of an abbey, called upon the curé of Saint-Sulpice, and explained to him his uncle’s condition. With regard to what followed, the best authority is the narrative drawn up by D’Alembert for the information of the King of Prussia, — a narrative which is confirmed by all the eye-witnesses who placed their observations on record.

“The curé of Saint-Sulpice replied to the Abbé Mignot that, since M. de Voltaire had lost his recollection, it was useless to visit him. The curé declared, however, that if M. de Voltaire did not make a public, solemn, and most circumstantial reparation of the scandal he had caused he could not in conscience bury him in holy ground. In vain the nephew replied that his uncle, while he still enjoyed the possession of all his faculties, had made a profession of faith, which the curé himself had recognized as authentic; that he had always disavowed the works imputed to him; that he had, nevertheless, carried his docility for the ministers of the church so far as to declare that, if he had caused any scandal, he asked pardon for it. The curé replied that that did not suffice; that M. de Voltaire was notoriously the declared enemy of religion; and that he could not, without compromising himself with the clergy and with the archbishop, accord to him ecclesiastical burial. The Abbé Mignot threatened to apply to the parliament

¹ 2 Correspondance Littéraire de La Harpe, 242.

for justice, which he hoped to obtain with the authentic documents he had in his possession. The curé, who felt that he was supported by authority, told him that he could do as he pleased.

. . . . "On Saturday, May 30th, the day of his death, some hours before that fatal moment, the Abbé Gaultier again offered his services, in a letter which he wrote to the Abbé Mignot; who went at once in quest of the Abbé Gaultier and the curé of Saint-Sulpice. The curé approached the sick man, and pronounced in his hearing the words *Jesus Christ*. At these words M. de Voltaire, who was still in a stupor, opened his eyes, and made a gesture with his hand, as if to send the curé away, and said, 'Let me die in peace.' The curé, more moderate on this occasion and more reasonable than usual with him, turned toward those who were present, and said, 'You see plainly, gentlemen, that he has not his head.'

"At that moment, however, he had complete possession of his reason; but the persons present, as you may well believe, sire, took no pains to contradict the curé. That pitiful parson [*capelan*] then retired from the chamber, and, in the conversation which he held with the family, he was so maladroit as to betray himself, and to prove clearly that all his conduct was an affair of vanity. He told them that they had done very ill to summon the Abbé Gaultier, who had spoiled everything; that they should have addressed themselves to him alone, the parish priest of the sick man; that he would have seen him in private and without witnesses; and that he would have arranged everything."¹

The Abbé Gaultier's narrative does not materially differ from that of D'Alembert.

Belle-et-Bonne, who never left his bedside during these last days, said to Lady Morgan in Paris, forty years afterwards, as she did to every one with whom she ever conversed on the subject, "To his last moment everything he said and did breathed the benevolence and goodness of his character; all announced in him tranquillity, peace, resignation, except a little movement of ill-humor which he showed to the curé of Saint-Sulpice, when he begged him to withdraw, and said, 'Let me die in peace.'"

He lingered until late in the evening. Ten minutes before he breathed his last, he roused from his slumber, took the hand of his valet, pressed it, and said to him, "Adieu, my dear Morand; I am dying." These were his last words. He died

¹ 25 Œuvres de Frédéric le Grand, 106.

peacefully and without pain, at a quarter past eleven, on Saturday evening, May 30, 1778, aged eighty-three years, six months, and nine days. This last incident Wagnière reports upon the authority of Morand, who was watching with his master that night. The body was embalmed the next morning. "The surgeons who performed that operation," adds the secretary, "assured me that they never saw a man better constituted than he was; and thus he could struggle three weeks against maladies that would have killed other men in a few days." It was their opinion that he might have lived and labored for several years longer, and perhaps equaled the century of Fontenelle, but for the excitements of the last three months.

His contrition, therefore, which seemed to his friends excessive, was not so unreasonable. He judged himself correctly. He, who had so many reasons to live, — his colony, his farms, his works, his *work*; he who had long known the secret of happy living, and to whom every hour and every task brought its peculiar joy, — he had thrown away, through his impatience, several years of life! He could not forgive himself. Moreover, he had left one imperative and sacred duty imperfectly done, — that of making adequate provision for Wagnière, — and this added another pang to his last days. "He spoke to me often," says the secretary, "of his will; he told me that at his death he wished me to have twenty thousand crowns [sixty thousand francs], including the eight thousand francs left me in his will. He said that he would complete the amount by notes payable to my order, which notes, in fact, I received from him; but, through an excess of delicacy, I was unwilling to keep them, and begged him to take them back. Then, when he sent me to Ferney, he ordered me to deposit with his banker at Lyons fifty-two thousand livres, which would be one day at my disposal, upon his orders. Unfortunately, I could not be near him when he died, despite his entreaties, and his notary also was not allowed to approach him, though he did not cease to ask for him. Hence, the impossibility of his executing his good intentions toward me."

CHAPTER XLVI.

BURIAL.

IT was Sunday morning, the last day of May, 1778. Voltaire lay dead in the house of Villette, on the bank of the Seine, not far from the spot on which he was born, in 1694. The family had concealed from the public the severity of his illness, and now, on this Sunday morning, concealed more carefully that he was dead. It had been an anxious question with them what they should do with his mortal remains. Already they had taken legal advice as to the right of the church to exclude them from the only burial-places in France, those under the control of ecclesiastics. The lawyers were against their contesting the point, and naturally they shrank from such a struggle. Nor did the case admit of delay, for the summer was upon them.

The Abbé Mignot, on applying to the curé of Saint-Sulpice, could obtain from him only this concession: "I consent that the body of M. de Voltaire be carried away without ceremony, and I relinquish to that end all curial rights." From the Abbé Gaultier he procured this: "I certify, to whomsoever it may concern, that, upon the requisition of M. de Voltaire, I went to him, and found him not in a state to be heard in confession." As it was supposed to be the intention of the relations to convey the body to Ferney, orders thrice repeated were dispatched to the bishop of that diocese to forbid the curé of the village to admit the corpse to the tomb prepared for it, or to perform over it the usual rites. But it was not the intention of the family to attempt to carry the corpse so far.

Early on Sunday morning, the Abbé Mignot, carrying with him these two certificates and the confession of faith made by his uncle several weeks before, left Paris in a post-chaise, and rode at full speed toward the village of Romilli-on-the-Seine, in Champagne, about one hundred and ten miles from Paris,

and made such good time that he arrived there at half past seven in the evening. At this place was the Abbey of Scellières, from which he drew his ecclesiastical title and revenue, and near which he had an official residence. He said to the prior that he had had the misfortune to lose his uncle, who in his last moments had expressed a desire to be buried at Fernel. This being impossible, the family wished the body to be deposited in the vault under the church near the abbey, and it was already on the way. The abbé exhibited his papers to the prior, who, knowing nothing of what had occurred at Paris, consented readily, and, indeed, without question or hesitation, to receive and bury the corpse.

Late in the evening of the same day, when the streets of Paris were silent and deserted, two carriages stood before the house of the Villettes, of which the foremost was drawn by six horses. In this vehicle was placed the body, uncoffined, wearing a dressing-gown, and the head covered with a large night-cap. It was placed in a reclining posture upon the seat, as if it were a night traveler asleep in his carriage. With the body rode a man-servant, who kept it in position. Six horses were probably employed to assist in conveying the impression that the carriage was that of a *grand seigneur*, who was sick, and riding rapidly to his country-seat. The other carriage contained M. d'Hornoy, grand-nephew, and two cousins of the deceased, these three being all of the poet's male relations who were within reach or knowledge. They traveled fast all the rest of the night, and the next day at noon drove into the court-yard of the abbey. The man who had ridden with the body descended half dead from the vehicle.

When the postilions were gone from the yard, and the servants of the abbey had been sent away, the corpse was removed to a basement room, which was then locked. The village undertaker provided an ordinary coffin of fir (*sapin*), and made all ready for the funeral. The worthy prior himself relates what followed: —

“In the afternoon [of June 1st] the Abbé Mignot, at the church door, made to me the solemn presentation of the body of his uncle, which had been prepared for burial. We sang the vespers for the dead; the body was watched all night in our choir, surrounded by torches. The morning of the next

day [June 2d], after five o'clock, all the ecclesiastics of the vicinity, of whom many are friends of the Abbé Mignot, having been formerly seminarists at Troyes [a few miles distant], performed the mass in presence of the body, and I celebrated high mass at eleven o'clock, before the interment, which took place before a numerous assembly. The family of M. de Voltaire set out on their return the next morning, satisfied with the honors rendered to his memory, and the prayers we had made to God for the repose of his soul."

An hour or two after the departure of the relations for Paris, the excellent prior was astounded to receive from his bishop a menacing letter forbidding the burial. "I have just learned, monsieur," wrote the Bishop of Troyes, June 2d, "that the family of M. de Voltaire, who died some days ago, have decided to transport his body to your abbey for interment, and this because the curé of Saint-Sulpice declared to them that he would not bury it in holy ground. I hope very much that you have not yet proceeded to that interment, which might have disagreeable consequences for you; and if, as I trust, the burial has not yet taken place you have only to declare that you cannot proceed in it without express orders from me."

The prior, much alarmed, replied immediately to the bishop. He related the circumstances, and added, —

"Allow me, monseigneur, although the houses of our order are not submitted to the jurisdiction of the *ordinaire*, to justify my conduct in the eyes of your grace; for, whatever may be the privileges of the order, its members ought always to pride themselves on respecting the episcopacy, and to do themselves honor by submitting their conduct, as well as their manners, to the examination of our lords the bishops. How could I suppose that they would refuse, that they could refuse, to M. de Voltaire the burial which was asked of me by his nephew, our lay abbot for twenty-three years, a magistrate for thirty years, an ecclesiastic who has lived much in this abbey, and who enjoyed great consideration in our order; also by a counselor of the parliament of Paris, grand-nephew of the deceased; by officers of a superior grade, all relatives and all worthy people? Under what pretext could I have believed that the curé of Saint-Sulpice had refused burial to M. de Voltaire, when that pastor had legalized with his own hand a profession of faith made by the deceased only two months ago, when he

wrote and signed a consent for the body to be transported without ceremony?"

There was a cry among the clergy for the expulsion of the prior from his order, and he felt it necessary to go to Paris in self-defense. It was only after much trouble and disturbance of mind that he overcame the "persecution" of his brethren, and could return safely to his abbey. It was also proposed to disinter the body; and it is certain there were members of the clerical body who were capable of sanctioning such an act. It was not done, however, and the body remained in the vault of the church in the village of Romilli-on-the-Seine. The place was indicated only by a small stone bearing the inscription, "Here lies Voltaire."

For some days the people of Paris knew nothing either of the burial or death of the poet, for the press received a positive order not to speak of him in any way whatever; and even the "Journal de Paris," which enjoyed a kind of monopoly of obituary notices, did not so much as mention the fact of his death! The actors of the national theatre, also, were ordered not to perform any piece of the deceased dramatist, and this prohibition remained in force for twenty-one days. The Academy, on learning the death of their most illustrious member, made the usual application to the Cordeliers for the customary service in his honor; but the archbishop (Beaumont), in anticipation of the request, had ordered those fathers to refuse it.

All at once, therefore, the topic of the season seemed annihilated. The gazettes, which had chronicled his movements, his retorts, his compliments, in every issue for many weeks, mentioned not his name; "Irène," "Nanine," "Alzire," were announced no more on the play-bills; and it was as though no such person as Voltaire had lived or died.

The reader, however, is aware that this *régime* was a despotism tempered by epigrams, and that the epigrammatists, as a body, had now come over to the side of Voltaire. On the door of the Academy were found written the first words of Racine's "Mithridate":—

" On nous faisait, Arbate, un fidèle rapport ;
Rome, en effet, triomphe." ¹

¹ A faithful report was made to you, Arbates; Rome, in effect, triumphs.

The unknown inscriber might have finished the line with a slight change: *Car Mithridate est mort*. At the next session of the Academy, the poet Le Brun handed about the room (which was equivalent to handing it about Paris) the following:—

“Celui que dans Athène eût adoré la Grèce,
Que dans Rome à sa table Auguste eût fait asseoir,
Nos Césars d’aujourd’hui n’ont pas voulu le voir,
Et Monsieur de Beaumont lui refuse une messe.”¹

There was a Latin epitaph launched, to this effect: “Here rests among monks he who against monks never rested.” Another epigram was of this purport: “Yes, you are right, Monsieur de Saint-Sulpice. And why bury him? Is he not immortal? To this great man, doubtless, can justly be refused a tomb, but not an altar.” Another ended thus: “He died consumed by the fire of his own genius. Nothing was wanting to his glory: priests cursed and kings loved him.” There were some epigrams on the other side; there was also a vast silent public opinion in devoted sympathy with Messieurs de Saint-Sulpice and de Beaumont. One couplet was easily remembered:

“Admirez d’Arouet la plaisante planète:
Il naquit chez Ninon, et mourut chez Villette.”²

This epitaph also is preserved:—

“Ci-gît l’enfant gâté du monde qu’il gâte.”³

The pious multitude, timid, ignorant, and thoughtless, felt with young Mozart, who was then giving concerts in Paris and producing immortal symphonies, with most precarious and slender results to himself. Baron Grimm was aiding and advising him; and, if Voltaire had lived, the child of genius might have been spared the cruel mortifications he was destined to experience, and not have died in debt and misery, while every capital in Europe was enriched and exalted by his works, and while life, through him, was made to every susceptible soul

¹ Him whom in Athens Greece had adored, whom in Rome Augustus had placed at his table, our Cæsars of to-day have not wished to see, and Monsieur de Beaumont refuses him a mass.

² Admire the pleasant destiny of Arouet: he was born in the house of Ninon, and died in that of Villette.

³ Here lies the spoiled child of the world which he spoiled.

in Christendom a more precious boon. Poor Mozart wrote to his father, in one of his long, rambling letters of this time, "The moment the symphony was over, I went off, in my joy, to the Palais-Royal, where I took a good ice, told over my beads, as I had vowed, and went home, where I am always happiest. . . . I must give you a piece of intelligence, that you perhaps already know: namely, that the ungodly, arch-villain, Voltaire, has died miserably, like a dog,—just like a brute. That is his reward!" This was written July 3, 1778, when the clergy had had a whole month to work in; and thus, we may be sure, spoke all the simple, fearful souls, of high or low degree, who owned their sway.

But this was not the verdict of the world above and beyond their domain. When it was noised abroad over Europe that it had been necessary to convey the body of the patriarch of literature by stealth and in the night from his native city, and to procure by stratagem a decent burial for it, the narrative roused the deepest indignation, which soon found utterance. Frederic of Prussia read the details in the long letter of D'Alembert quoted above. Busied as he was with important and menacing complications, he set about preparing with his own hand a formal eulogium of the poet. Since the death of Mauvertuis, he had been the president of his own Academy. November 26, 1778, the Berlin Academy met in special session to commemorate the death of Voltaire, to which all that was most distinguished and eminent in Prussia was invited. The king delivered the eulogium, of more than an hour's duration, which is published in his works.¹ It consisted chiefly of an outline of the deceased author's life, and comments upon some of his writings; a task which Frederic executed, as the Duke de Villars played tragedy, "like a duke and peer." There are errors of fact in the address, and errors of judgment; but when the king came to speak of the surreptitious burial, he laid about him like a man, rather than like a king. He poured burning contempt upon "the imbecile priests," who had sent expresses over the kingdom to insure dishonor to the remains of a great man. And yet, said he, "we could pardon their brutal stupidity, if their perverse reasoning did not disturb the repose of private citizens." He drew a contrast between the humane

¹ 7 Œuvres, 50.

morality which reigns in the works of Voltaire and the conduct of "the vile and contemptible beings" who had made his life a ceaseless struggle. The king continued:—

"Not content with giving moral precepts, he preached beneficence by his example. It was he whose courageous support came to the succor of the unfortunate family of Calas; who pleaded the cause of the Sirvens, and snatched them from the barbarous hands of their judges. He would have raised from the dead the Chevalier de la Barre if he had had the gift of miracles. It is noble in a philosopher, from the bosom of his retreat, to lift his voice and the voice of mankind, of which he is the organ, and force judges to reverse iniquitous sentences. If M. de Voltaire had possessed but this single trait, he would deserve to be placed among the small number of the true benefactors of humanity. Philosophy and religion teach in concert the ways of virtue. Tell me which is the more Christian: the magistrate who cruelly forces a family to fly their country, or the philosopher who gives it a home and protection; the judge who uses the sword of the law to assassinate a rash young man, or the sage who wishes to save his life in order to reform him; the executioner of Calas, or the saviour of his stricken family. These, gentlemen, are the actions which will render the memory of M. de Voltaire forever dear to those who are endowed with a feeling heart and a susceptible mind. However precious may be the gifts of the intellect and of the imagination, the lofty flights of genius and the vast accumulations of knowledge, those qualities, though nature bestows them but rarely, never rank higher than acts of humanity and beneficence. The former we admire; the latter we bless and venerate."

Such passages had the greater effect upon the audience from the fact that young D'Etallonde, the companion of the Chevalier de la Barre, was present on the occasion, and in sight of a portion of the audience. The king concluded his oration with another burst of fury against the priests who had denied him burial:—

"What! [cried he] in the eighteenth century, when the light of knowledge is more spread abroad than ever before, when the philosophic spirit has made so much progress, there are still to be found pontiffs more barbarous than Hercules, fitter to live with the people of Ceylon than in the midst of the French nation! Blinded by a false zeal, drunk with fanaticism, they prevent the last duties of humanity from being paid to one of the most famous men France has ever produced. The best destiny they can look for is that they and their vile

artifices will remain forever buried in the darkness of oblivion, while the fame of Voltaire will increase from age to age, and transmit his name to immortality!"

This was certainly very much in the style of a duke and peer; but it was the natural expression of an honest mind. All the vigilance of the police could not keep this oration out of France. Three months after its delivery, however, it was mentioned by Paris diarists as being "still very scarce." The King of Prussia did not stop here. As the clergy of France continued to mark their hostility, Frederic, at D'Alembert's suggestion, set on foot a series of truly Voltairian manœuvres, to induce the Catholic clergy of Berlin to hold a service in honor of the poet, whose pamphlet the king had once caused to be burnt by the hangman in a public square of his capital. Time, tact, and money were required to accomplish this, but it was done. The second anniversary of the author's death was the day of the solemnity, which was announced to Europe by an official paragraph in the Berlin Gazette of May 30, 1780: "To-day, at nine in the morning, in the Catholic church of this city, with all suitable pomp, was celebrated a solemn service for the soul of Messire Marie-Arouet de Voltaire. This service was besought by the Catholic Academicians of Berlin, and they obtained it of M. the Curé with the more facility, justice, and reason by producing authentic proofs that the late M. de Voltaire made before his death a profession of orthodox faith, that he had confessed, and edified Christian souls by considerable alms and other good works," etc.

The Empress Catherine of Russia expressed her sentiments in the universal language of deeds. She requested Baron Grimm to visit Madame Denis on her behalf, and make known her desire to buy the library and manuscripts of her uncle for transfer to St. Petersburg. Madame Denis consenting, the empress wrote to her a letter with her own hand, bearing this inscription, also written by herself: "*For Madame Denis, niece of a great man who loved me much.*" She assured her that she should regard as a precious trust "that library, which susceptible souls would never see without remembering that this great man knew how to inspire human beings with the universal benevolence which all his writings breathe, even those of pure diversion, because his own soul was profoundly affected with

it." The library proved to be a very miscellaneous collection of six thousand two hundred and ten volumes, for which the empress paid, as the receipt shows, which still exists, "135,-398 livres, 4 sous, 6 deniers tournois."

She invited Wagnière to come to Petersburg and arrange the books precisely in the manner in which they were placed at Ferney. The secretary went thither and arranged the books, accordingly. When all was ready the empress came to inspect his work. On entering the room she bowed low before a statue of Voltaire, and then, turning to Wagnière, said to him, "Monsieur, this is the man to whom I owe all that I know and all that I am." On learning that Wagnière was insufficiently provided for, she granted him a pension for his life of fifteen hundred francs per annum. Wagnière visited also the court of Frederic of Prussia, where he received from the king every mark of regard.

But all this homage of crowned heads paled before the series of tributes paid to the memory of Voltaire in his native Paris. The government could not long maintain the interdict upon the mention of his name. At a session of the Academy, in August, 1778, Secretary d'Alembert proposed Voltaire as the subject of the prize poem for the year following. He added these words: "And to augment, if possible, the ardor which men of letters will doubtless experience for a subject so interesting for them and for us, I take the liberty of offering myself the sum of six hundred livres, which, joined to the ordinary value of the prize, will form a gold medal of eleven hundred livres." The proposal was accepted with enthusiasm; but the Academy claimed the right of sharing the expense equally among themselves.

It was not until March, 1779, that occurred the installation of M. Ducis, the successor to Voltaire's chair in the Academy. Baron Grimm declares that no public meeting of the Academy ever attracted such a concourse, or created such an excitement. Two or three times the doors were forced, in spite of the guards, and several persons narrowly escaped suffocation. All the family of the deceased member were present, and Madame Denis wore the splendid furs and jewelry which the Empress Catherine had recently sent her. The eulogium pronounced by the new member escaped failure, and was occasion-

ally much applauded. But when, afterwards, one of the clerical members ventured to express the wish that "some friendly hand would retrench from the works of Voltaire everything adverse to religion, good morals, and the laws, and thus efface the spots which tarnish his glory," he was hissed without mercy. D'Alembert again presented himself as a benefactor to the Academy, though he was one of its least affluent members. He presented busts of Voltaire and Molière for the embellishment of the room, and remarked the points of resemblance between the late member and the immortal author of "Tartuffe."

A few days after, a little comedy was produced at the national theatre by La Harpe, called "The Rival Muses," which might have been suggested by a sentence in the King of Prussia's eulogium, where he repeats that Voltaire was "a whole Academy in himself." The piece turns upon the versatility of the author. Each of the Nine Sisters claims him for her own, finds reasons for the claim in his works, and contends for the honor of presenting him to Apollo. The comedy, which was in one act and in verse, would in any case have been successful; but it happened to be produced just as copies of the King of Prussia's eulogium were beginning to be secretly circulated in Paris, and when it was whispered about that the Archbishop of Paris was endeavoring to procure the suppression of the comedy. The little piece was therefore received with the greatest applause. A play, a book, a man, can become the flag of a party; and soldiers do not care to remark the spots upon the bunting of which their flag is composed.

A few weeks after, May 30, 1779, the anniversary of Voltaire's death, the actors of the national theatre, at the instance of D'Alembert, performed the tragedy of "Agathocle," left by the poet incomplete and uncorrected. For this solemnity D'Alembert wrote an address, which was spoken by the veteran Brizart, in which he recalled the touching spectacle of the old dramatic artist, faithful to his vocation of giving high delight to his countrymen almost to his last breath, "occupying himself with your pleasures at the moment when you were about to lose him forever."

CHAPTER XLVII.

TO THE PANTHEON.

FOR thirteen years the body of Voltaire remained in the vault of the village church in Champagne. All had then changed in France, or was swiftly changing. The Revolution was in full tide. June 1, 1791, the King of France, the same ill-starred Louis XVI., but then a king only in name, signed a decree of the National Assembly, which ordered that "the ashes of François-Marie Arouet de Voltaire be transferred from the Church of Romilli to that of Sainte-Geneviève in Paris,"—the church that was to be styled thenceforth the Pantheon of France. It was at first intended to deposit the body in the Pantheon on the 4th of July following, a day as dear then to France as to America; but the intervening time was found too short, and the crowning ceremonial was of necessity postponed until July 10th.

The body was solemnly removed from the place where it had rested, and was placed upon an open funereal car, twenty feet high, adorned with oak leaves and laurel; and it began its long journey under the escort of the local officers and a detachment of the National Guard of the province. As the cortège advanced from village to village, and from town to town, it was joined temporarily by the mayors and their associate functionaries, as well as by files of citizen-soldiers, carrying at the ends of their muskets leaves of oak and branches of laurel. The procession, which changed every moment, passed through lines of spectators, who threw flowers upon the sarcophagus, and saluted it by presenting crowns. The villagers and peasants were then rejoicing in their first freedom from those feudal burdens, those complex vexations, which Voltaire had undermined by satire and argument, and they seemed to feel that it was to him they owed their deliverance. The people of rural France were enjoying, for the moment,

some of the substantial fruits of reasonable liberty, and no one yet foresaw the price they were to pay for it, — they, and their children, and their children's children! Aged peasants were seen to shed tears of grateful homage, and mothers of families lifted their little children above the heads of the crowd, that they, too, might see. Some persons brought out precious objects from their houses, which they made more precious by causing them to touch the sarcophagus. Some priests, too, restored to manhood by the Revolution, were observed to sympathize with and share the popular emotion.

During the night, the procession still held on its way, welcomed in every village by torches and lanterns, so that the road by which it was to pass seemed all lighted up in advance. In the day-time the towns disclosed triumphal arches, hung with garlands of flowers; and, with that classic taste that seems indigenous to France alone, dances arranged themselves spontaneously about the car, and young girls, clad in white, threw upon it jessamine, violets, and roses. At that time of year, it was said, nature herself had lavished upon the earth the three beautiful colors by which recreated France had symbolized the union of the three orders of the people.

The car itself was a beautiful object. The great structure was drawn by four horses caparisoned in violet, and covered with flowers. At each corner of the lofty platform was a pilaster of white marble, from which elegant hangings were suspended, and which sustained a canopy all fluttering with the three national colors. The sarcophagus was so placed that it appeared to be suspended from garlands of flowers; and round the outside of the car a gallery was constructed, from which seemed to grow poplars and cypress-trees. On the front of the car was written, "To the manes of Voltaire;" along one side, "If man is created free, he ought to govern himself;" upon the other, "If man has tyrants, he ought to dethrone them."

When the procession reached the gates of the capital, it was met by a numerous deputation of municipal officers, headed by the mayor; also by delegations from the principal patriotic clubs and literary societies. It was nearly dark when the cortège entered Paris, and it marched that night only as far as the site of the Bastille, not yet wholly removed. There, upon

the very spot where the tower had stood in which Voltaire had twice been confined, the architect Cellerier had constructed an altar out of the stones of the fallen edifice, covered with laurels and roses. Upon this the sarcophagus was placed. On the side of the altar was the inscription, — “Upon this spot, where despotism chained thee, Voltaire, receive the homage of a free people!”

“All Paris,” says M. Dubois, the historian of these events, “went as if upon pilgrimage to pay their tributes of love and respect to him who, conveyed clandestinely from Paris in 1778, reëntered it after thirteen years of exile, avenged, adored, and triumphant.” In the midst of the general acclamations, one cry not in harmony with the rest was heard: “*God, thou shalt be avenged!*” It was the voice, says the same writer, of “a fanatic priest, who, full of the souvenirs of 1572, had edged his way into the crowd, as formerly, in glorious Rome, some drunken porters mingled insults with the acclamations of the triumph.”

All night the sarcophagus remained among the ruins of the Bastille. On Monday morning, clouds veiled the rising sun; it rained several times; but before noon the clouds broke away, the sun shone out warm and clear, making a beautiful afternoon for the procession through the city. Towards three o'clock, all being in readiness, the sarcophagus was placed upon the new car designed by David, and the cortége began to move toward the Pantheon. First marched a detachment of cavalry, a body of sappers, drummers, artillerymen, and some of the young National Guard. A group of citizens from distant places followed, carrying medallions of Voltaire, Rousseau, and Franklin, with the bust of Mirabeau in the centre, then only a few months dead. The workmen employed in demolishing the Bastille marched next, their chief, Talloy, carrying chains, bullets, armor, and other objects found in the Bastille. Another body of workmen bore the flag of the Bastille, and among them was seen the giantess who had made herself conspicuous in the attack on the building. Behind them marched citizens armed with pikes, surrounding one who carried upon the top of his pike a red cap. A model of the Bastille, made of its own stone, one of the eighty models designed for the departments of France, was carried in the procession by the Old French

Guard, wearing the uniform in which they had refused to fire upon their countrymen. The Jacobin Club was conspicuous, and the Hundred Swiss, and bodies of the National Guard. The academies, the actors, the society of artists, and indeed almost every organized body in the metropolis took part in the procession, or contributed a delegation to it.

Among the maxims and devices exhibited, the following were remarked, all taken from Voltaire's writings:—

“I have done a little good; it is my best work.”

“They have troubled the earth, and I have consoled it.”

“If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him.”

A striking object in the procession was the statue of Voltaire, modeled upon that of Houdon, gilt, crowned with laurels, carried by men dressed in Greek costume, and surrounded by pupils of the Academy of Painting and Sculpture, all dressed in the Greek manner.

The great car that bore the sarcophagus, a stupendous object indeed, announced itself from a long distance. It was preceded by a chorus of singers and a band of music, also clad in the Greek fashion, many carrying instruments of music of antique pattern. The car itself was the crowning marvel of the occasion. It was a vehicle of vast size and height, supported on four great wheels of bronze, and adorned in every part by allegorical figures and decorations from the designs of David. It presented the general appearance of a magnificent altar, covered with blue velvet sown with stars of gold, upon the summit of which was the sarcophagus, and upon that a full-length figure of Voltaire, half reclining, in an attitude of sleep, and covered with a purple cloth. Immortality, represented as a young girl, winged, and as if just descending from heaven, was placing upon his head a crown of stars. This imposing structure, “forty feet high,” was drawn by twelve white horses, harnessed four abreast, led by grooms dressed in the manner of ancient Rome.

The passing of this wonderful vehicle, preceded by its band of music and its chorus of singers, by ranks of men also in long white tunics and wearing crowns of green branches, kindled all the enthusiasm of the susceptible Parisians. Upon the car were various inscriptions, the reading of which increased and prolonged the emotion of the people:—

“Mortals are equal ; it is not birth, it is virtue alone, which makes the difference.”

“It is necessary to love the laws ; it is necessary to be their slave, and to bear all the burden of them. He who is willing to violate them does not love his country.”

“He defended Calas, La Barre, Sirven, and Montbailly.”

“Poet, philosopher, historian, he gave a great impulse to the human mind, and prepared us to become free.”

“He combated the atheists and the fanatics.”

“He inspired toleration.”

“He claimed the rights of man against serfdom and feudalism.”

Immediately behind the car walked Belle-et-Bonne and her husband, with her infant daughter carried by its nurse. La Harpe also walked with this group. Then came deputations from the National Assembly, the municipality, the courts of justice, and the veteran soldiers, the procession being closed by another body of cavalry. A hundred thousand persons, it is said, composed this procession, which was witnessed by six hundred thousand spectators. “It seemed,” says Dubois, “that that worship of human excellence, elegant and poetic, which made the delight of antiquity, and which is still the charm of souls susceptible to the beautiful creations of the arts and letters, lived again in its completeness before our eyes.”

The procession halted first before the Opera-House, adorned with the bust of Voltaire, and with medallions bearing the names of his operas. Here all the artists of the company joined in singing that spirited song of his at the end of the first act of “Samson,” which the Revolution adopted as its own, beginning, —

“Peuple, éveille-toi ! Romps tes fers !”¹

Thousands of voices joined in the chorus, which had already become familiar to the people. The next halt was in front of the house of the Villettes, upon the street which had been the Quai of the Monks, but which had now received the name it still bears, “Quai de Voltaire.” The car here passed under a magnificent triumphal arch composed of four large poplar-trees united by garlands of oak leaves, a beautiful umbrageous roof, from which hung a crown of roses that descended upon the car as soon as it stopped. Upon a spacious plat-

¹ People, awake ! Break your chains !

form in front of the house were seated in semicircles, one above the other, fifty young girls, all dressed in white robes with blue girdles, holding civic crowns, and wearing upon their heads diadems of roses. In front of the exquisite amphitheatre formed by them were the two daughters of Calas, in deep mourning, who, when the car stopped, advanced towards it, kissed the sarcophagus of their deliverer, and lifted up their hands in the attitude of blessing him. Madame de Villette also stepped forward, kissed the effigy, and raised her child in her arms, as if dedicating it to his spirit. This scene passed to the sound of pathetic music; and the young mother, overcome by her emotions, had to be carried away.

A halt was made, of course, at the Théâtre-Français, which was now called the "Theatre of the Nation." Here the decorations and the ceremonial were not less remarkable. All the columns were wreathed with garlands, and the whole edifice was brilliant. One inscription read, "He wrote 'Œdipe' at seventeen." Another was, "He wrote 'Irène' at eighty-three." Thirty-two medallions were placed upon the pillars, each containing the name of one of Voltaire's dramas. When the car stopped before the theatre, curtains opened, and exhibited a sanctuary, so lighted that all the rays formed a halo around the head of Voltaire's statue. Here, while the musicians again performed the choros from "Samson," La Rive placed upon the sarcophagus a crown, and the ladies of the company also laid their wreaths upon it.

It was now late in the evening, and it began to rain again with such abundance that a part of the persons accompanying the car sought refuge in the vestibule of the theatre, and there was a general flight of the ladies. Then, lighted by thousands of torches, the procession resumed its march, and reached the Pantheon at ten o'clock in the evening. The sarcophagus was deposited in the place prepared for it, near the tombs of Descartes and Mirabeau.

And there the body remained, an object of veneration to many, an object of horror to many, until the return of the Bourbon king to Paris, after the departure of Bonaparte to Elba. In April, 1814, a few of the royalists, one of whom was De Puymorin, the Director of the Mint, who afterwards told the story, represented to the ministry that the presence of the re-

remains of Voltaire in the ancient church of Sainte-Geneviève was an outrage not to be borne. There were several conferences, we are told, as to the manner in which those remains should be removed. It was decided, at length, that it should be done secretly, and that the secret should be kept. One night, in the month of May, 1814, the bones of Voltaire and of Rousseau were taken out of their coffins of lead, tumbled into a common sack, and placed in a hackney coach stationed in the rear of the church. The carriage moved away slowly, accompanied by five or six persons, and went out of town by unfrequented streets to the barrier De la Gare, opposite Bercy. Near that barrier there was then an extensive piece of waste ground inclosed with a board fence, public property, not yet put to any use whatever. Near the middle of the inclosure a deep hole had been previously dug by persons who were then waiting for the arrival of this strange burial party. The sack of bones was emptied into the pit; a sack of lime was poured upon them. The hole was filled up with earth, all traces of the burial were obliterated as far as possible, and the party then separated in silence.¹

The secret was well kept. There was occasionally a rumor, difficult to trace, and not generally believed, that the sarcophagus was empty. In 1864, when the family of the Villettes became extinct, the heart of Voltaire (which had been removed from the body when it was embalmed, in 1778, inclosed in a silver vase and given by Madame Denis to the husband of Belle-et-Bonne) became the property of the nation, and it was a question with the usurper what should be done with it. He suggested that it be placed with the other remains of the poet in the church of Sainte-Geneviève. The Archbishop of Paris, who was probably acquainted with these facts, observed that it might be well to ascertain first whether the ashes of Voltaire were really in the place where they had been deposited. An examination of the sarcophagus was ordered. It was opened, and found to be empty. Thus the fate actually befell the remains which the poet had dreaded from the time when he saw the body of Adrienne Lecouvreur carried out, at dead of night, and placed in an unmarked grave in a vacant lot of the outskirts of Paris. "God, thou shalt be avenged!"

¹ Voltaire, *Son Retour et sa Mort*. Par G. Desnoiresterres. Page 519.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE PLACES THAT KNEW HIM.

THE "Life of Voltaire since his Death" could be an interesting and important book, if the time for it had come. Here I will merely add a few particulars appertaining to him and to it, which may gratify the reader's curiosity.

A few weeks before his death he wrote, "I must set out in fifteen days, or all perishes at Ferney." Much that he valued there did perish speedily. He left a will, brief, direct, and very French in its provisions, by which he fulfilled an old engagement to his niece, Madame Denis, in leaving her the bulk of his fortune. She, at the age of sixty-eight, recompensed herself for sharing the long exile of the most gifted and agreeable man in Europe by marrying the dullest, her Duvivier, aged forty-eight, — a man of much silent force, considerable property, and an insensibility which won for him the name of the Extinguisher.¹ The reader, perhaps, will not be sorry to learn that he reduced her at once to complete subjection, and that they lived together the usual life of elderly French couples. She soon sold the château and grounds of Ferney, and the estate was gradually broken up. The watchmaking interest declined. Many of the "artists," as they were then styled, returned to Geneva or removed to Paris. At the present time the village contains 1200 inhabitants, about the same number as at the death of Voltaire, in 1778.

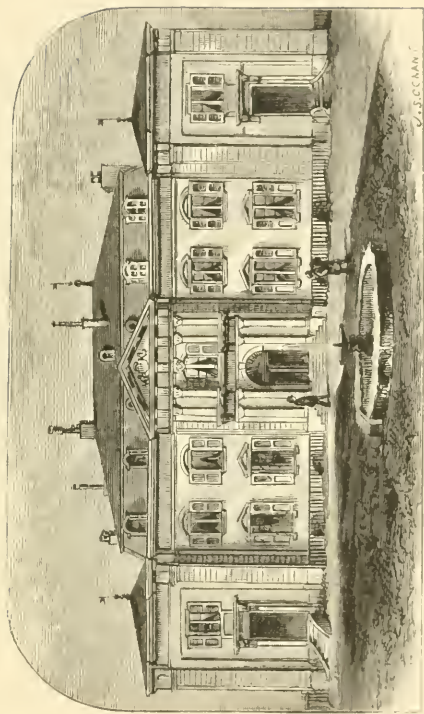
It was evidently the expectation of the lord of Ferney that his niece would at least retain possession of his property there. Some passages of his will seem to imply as much. "I leave," says the will, "to Monsieur Wagnière eight thousand livres, which, joined to the four hundred livres per annum that he possesses in his own right at Paris, by contract (certified by M. Lalen, notary), upon the India Company, will secure him

¹ Souvenirs of Madame Vigée le Brun, page 146. New York, 1879.

a suitable livelihood, especially if he remains with Madame Denis." He also bequeathed to his servants a year's wages, on the apparent presumption that they would be kept in the service of the family. He left to the poor of the parish ("if there are any poor," he added) three hundred livres. He left to Madame Wagnière his fine garments of fur, silk, and velvet. He requested the curé of the parish to accept "a little diamond of the value of five hundred francs," and gave a sum of fifteen hundred francs to the local lawyer who would assist Madame Denis in the execution of his will. To his nephew, the Abbé Mignot, and to his grand-nephew, D'Hornoy, he bequeathed one hundred thousand francs each.

The château still exists, with some external changes. It has been ever since one of the chief objects of curiosity in the neighborhood; and the room in which the master used to sleep and dictate remains very much as it was on the day when he left it for his last journey to Paris. The little church also still stands, though of late years used only as a hayloft, store-room, or stable. Wagnière lived and died at Ferney. M. Clogenson, one of the editors of Voltaire's works, visited the village in 1825, when he found the son of Wagnière living there as justice of the peace, his father having died in 1802. "It was," says M. Clogenson, "from this worthy magistrate that I learned how much the memory of Voltaire is revered at Ferney; and his testimony was confirmed by all the inhabitants whom I consulted, and, notably, by an old man almost a hundred years of age, named Marc Grandperret, an ancient farm servant of Voltaire."

Belle-et-Bonne survived him forty-four years, most of the time a widow in liberal circumstances, a familiar and valued personage in the intellectual society of Paris. She burned one grain of incense before his bust every day as long as she lived. Lady Morgan, who visited her in 1816, describes her apartments as a kind of temple dedicated to his memory. Her library contained his works, her desk his manuscript letters, and the arm-chair in which he sat was in the chimney corner, — a chair provided with a little desk on its right arm, in which he read and wrote during the last twenty years of his life. On the mantel-piece was his bust in porcelain; in a corner of the room, a copy of Pigalle's statue; and his young



VOLTAIRE'S HOUSE AT FERNEY.

portrait, mentioned elsewhere, hung upon one of the walls. In a closet she preserved the rich dressing-gown worn when he received the crowd who thronged to him in 1778; also, the coat he wore at his coronation, and the very crown of laurel which was then placed upon his head. All these relics she would exhibit to a sympathetic friend like Lady Morgan, for whom she also arranged a Voltairean festival, at which many grains of incense were burned before the bust, and she read with good effect the poem contributed to the festival of 1791 by Joseph Chénier. She died in 1822. Her son, who lived to 1859, was a devotee of everything his mother detested, and left his large fortune to the Count de Chambord, the heir of the Bourbons. His will, however, was broken, and the property fell to his natural heirs. This is a fact full of significance. Such lapses will continually occur until "philosophy" becomes constructive, and provides assurance, consolation, and admonition for the weak, the blind, and the always anxious sons of men.

The houses occupied by Voltaire during the latter half of his life all exhibit some mementos of him, from the royal palace of Potsdam to the Hôtel de Villette, No. 1 Rue de Beaune. Les Délices, of late years, has usually been occupied as a young ladies' boarding-school. It is still called by the name that Voltaire gave it, and the street which has grown up along the ancient road is called the Rue Des Délices. An American lady in Geneva writes (October 10, 1879), "The theatre that Voltaire built adjoining Les Délices, in the form of the letter T, seems small even for private theatricals, — about thirty of my paces along the longest part of the T. Small as it is, it was used by a company from Paris, until pious Geneva put a stop to such sinful practices. Times have changed since then. Last week this same Geneva opened its elegant new theatre, built upon the model of the opera-house in Paris, at the cost of some millions of francs, and the city gives its manager the theatre rent free, the gas and orchestra, and a subvention of a hundred thousand francs a year."

Yet Calvin is not forgotten there. In the number of the "Journal de Genève" in which the scheme of the first season of this theatre was conspicuously published and its opening announced, there could be found modest advertisements in

small type, calling the attention of parents to "courses of evangelical instruction for young ladies every Monday and Friday," by resident pastors; also, an announcement of "a *séance* upon the evangelization of Spain." We observe similar coincidences in other Calvinized towns. Boston, for example, has surpassed all cities of its rank in America in making liberal provision for the fine arts, and in adorning its public places with statues, some of which are more than well intentioned. The mother city of New England has not yet advanced to the point, reached by Geneva, of giving municipal aid to the dramatic art, which of all others needs it most. It is, however, sure to do so in good time; perhaps, to take the lead in doing so.

At Cirey, the seat of the Du Châtelets since the thirteenth century, and still possessed by a branch of the family, Voltaire is more nearly obliterated than at any other of his celebrated abodes. Cirey-sur-Blaise is still hard to find. An American traveler, however, reached the place during the vintage of 1878, and found it the same secluded land of vines and iron that it was when Voltaire and Emilie lived, loved, and quarreled there, one hundred and forty years ago. From the nearest station (Bar-sur-Aube, upon the Chaumont and Troyes railroad) an old-fashioned diligence rumbles daily to Cirey, distant ten miles or more, crossing the Blaise several times on little bridges.

Voltaire's rooms were in the "old château," but they were demolished by the reconstruction of the interior. On a white marble tablet between the two windows of his chamber was this inscription:—

"Du repos, ma douce étude,
Peu de livres, point d'ennuyeux,
Un ami dans la solitude,—
Voilà mon sort; il est heureux."¹

This marble tablet is still preserved in the château, and is the only *relic* of Voltaire, if it can be called such, which is to be found there.

In the house of the manager of the estate, however, there are portraits of Voltaire and Madame du Châtelet, and in the upper story of the old château are preserved the walls of the

¹ Some rest, my pleasing study, few books, no bores, a friend in solitude,— such is my lot; it is happy.

little theatre in which they used to entertain their friends. The estate appears to have been kept entire, although the Duke du Châtelet lost his head during the Revolution.

It is at Paris that the memory of Voltaire has been most vividly preserved. A peculiar warfare has been waged there at intervals, for a hundred years, between his spirit and the spirit to which he gave the name of *l'Infâme*. At Paris, as everywhere else, it is the enemies of truth that do most to spread abroad a knowledge of it. That empty sarcophagus speaks for it more powerfully than if it were a Tamerlane's pyramid of bones. It is vocal; it is resonant; it booms and thunders over the earth. His dust might have been forgotten; but that pregnant void, that significant emptiness, never ceases to provoke, necessitate, and emphasize explanation. And as often as, since his death, anything has been done or proposed, in Paris to promote his objects or signalize his name, *l'Infâme* has eagerly seized the rôle of advertiser of the scheme. We can tell the date of the editions of his works by the number of feeble attacks upon them mentioned in catalogues of French publications.

Remarkable, too, is the *force* of the retort that *l'Infâme* provokes whenever Voltaire is the object of attack. The Bourbon restoration, endured by France from 1814 to 1830, which emptied his coffin, produced Béranger's "Baptism of Voltaire," which will be a fresh possession to each generation after the trivial episode of the restoration has been generally forgotten. The discovery of the midnight theft of the remains suggested the project of a national monument in his honor, the mention of which elicited electric responses.

"A monument to Voltaire in France," wrote Garibaldi, February 10, 1867, "means the return of that noble country to its position at the head of human progress towards the fraternity of nations. This is of good augury for the entire world, of which that mighty man was a citizen, and a terrible shock to the coalition of despotism and falsehood."

On the 30th of May, 1878, when he had been dead a hundred years, we may say with literal truth, that "*all Paris*" was at length attentive to him; for while Victor Hugo was addressing words of impassioned eulogium to a vast concourse of all that was most enlightened and most masculine in France,

churches were filled with capitalists and ladies crouching before their priests in timorous or affected deprecation. Victor Hugo's discourse on that unique occasion was the crowning utterance of this century : it was the most Christian thing spoken on earth since the dying Christ said, " They know not what they do." Here is the page of it which kindled the audience to the noblest enthusiasm, spoken as it was almost within sight of the Exposition of that year :—

" If to kill is a crime, to kill much cannot be an extenuating circumstance. [Laughter and bravos.] If to steal is a disgrace, to invade cannot be a glory. [Continued applause.] The Deums are of small significance here ; homicide is homicide ; bloodshed is bloodshed ; it alters nothing to call one's self Caesar or Napoleon ; in the eyes of the eternal God, a murderer is not changed in character because, instead of a hangman's cap, there is placed upon his head an emperor's crown. [Long acclamation. Triple salvo of applause.] Ah ! let us proclaim absolute verities ! Let us dishonor war ! No ; bloody glory does not exist. No ; it is not good, and it is not useful, to make corpses. No ; it cannot be that life should travail for death. No, O mothers who surround me ; it cannot be that war, the thief, is to continue to take your offspring. No ; it cannot be that women are to bear children in anguish, that men are to be born, that communities are to plow and sow, that the peasant is to fertilize the fields, and the workman enrich the cities, that thinkers are to meditate, that industry is to perform its marvels, that genius is to execute its prodigies, that the vast human activity is to multiply in the presence of the starry heavens its efforts and creations, in order to produce that frightful international exposition which is called a field of battle ! [Profound sensation. The whole audience rises and applauds the speaker.] The true field of battle, — behold it ! It is this rendezvous of the masterpieces of human labor which Paris at this moment offers to the world !"

The oration was of such force, beauty, and truth that it must stand as the highest effort of the kind in a literature rich in the tributes of genius to human worth. The happiest touch in it, perhaps, was the passage in which the orator spoke of Voltaire's habitual use of ridicule :—

" Whatever may be his just wrath, it passes, and the irritated Voltaire always gives place to the Voltaire calmed. Then, in that profound eye, the SMILE appears.

" That smile is wisdom. That smile, I repeat it, is Voltaire. That

smile sometimes becomes laughter, but the philosophic sadness tempers it. Toward the strong, it is mockery; toward the weak, it is a caress. It disquiets the oppressor, and reassures the oppressed. Against the great, it is raillery; for the little, it is pity. Ah, let us be moved by that smile! It had in it rays of the dawn. It illuminated the true, the just, the good, and what there is of worthy in the useful. It lighted up the interior of superstitions. Those ugly things it is salutary to see; he has shown them. Luminous, that smile was fruitful also. The new society, the desire for equality and concession, and that beginning of fraternity which called itself tolerance, reciprocal good-will, the just accord of men and rights, reason recognized as the supreme law, the annihilation of prejudices and fixed opinions, the serenity of souls, the spirit of indulgence and of pardon, harmony, peace, — behold what have come from that great smile!

“On the day — very near, without any doubt — when the identity of wisdom and clemency will be recognized, the day when the amnesty will be proclaimed, I affirm it, up there, in the stars, Voltaire will smile. [Triple salvo of applause. Cries, *Vive l'amnistie!*]

“Gentlemen, between two servants of humanity, who appeared eighteen hundred years apart, there is a mysterious relation.

“To combat Pharisaism; to unmask imposture; to overthrow tyrannies, usurpations, prejudices, falsehoods, superstitions; to demolish the temple in order to rebuild it, that is to say, to replace the false by the true; to attack a ferocious magistracy; to attack a sanguinary priesthood; to take a whip and drive the money-changers from the sanctuary; to reclaim the heritage of the disinherited; to protect the weak, the poor, the suffering, the overwhelmed; to struggle for the persecuted and oppressed, — that was the war of Jesus Christ! And who waged that war? It was Voltaire.

“The completion of the evangelical work is the philosophical work; the spirit of meekness began, the spirit of tolerance continued. Let us say it with a sentiment of profound respect: **JESUS WEPT; VOLTAIRE SMILED.** Of that divine tear and of that human smile is composed the sweetness of the present civilization. [Prolonged applause.]”

This oration naturally excited the ire of the Bishop of Orleans, who wrote a letter to the orator, objecting to it, and presuming to remind him that he, too, had been reared a churchman. In his reply, the great poet seized the opportunity to direct attention anew to the woful alliance between despot and pontiff which has drenched Europe in blood age after age: —

“France had to pass an ordeal. France was free. A man traitorously seized her in the night, threw her down, and garroted her. If a

people could be killed, that man had slain France. He made her dead enough for him to be able to reign over her. He began his reign, since it was a reign, with perjury, lying in wait, and massacre. He continued it by oppression, by tyranny, by despotism, by an unspeakable parody of religion and justice. He was monstrous and little. The *Te Deum*, *Magnificat*, *Salvum fac*, *Gloria tibi*, were sung for him. Who sang them? Ask yourself. The law delivered the people up to him. The church delivered God up to him. Under that man sank down right, honor, country; he had beneath his feet oath, equity, probity, the glory of the flag, the dignity of men, the liberty of citizens. That man's prosperity disconcerted the human conscience. It lasted nineteen years. During that time you were in a palace. I was in exile. I pity you, sir."

Here again we observe the power of the stroke which is called forth when *l'Infâme* lifts its hand against the wonderful man who came into the world to crush it.

During his long life he never saw Rome. Italy, whose language, literature, and history he peculiarly loved, was closed against him. Nevertheless, at Rome, too, the hundredth anniversary of his death was celebrated with much enthusiasm. Columns of animadversion in the ecclesiastical gazettes gave the usual intense publicity to the project, and enhanced the lustre of the occasion. In the morning there was a great meeting of the Freemasons at the grand lodge of their order, where a suitable address was delivered, followed by a poem and by shorter speeches. In the evening, the Apollo theatre was crowded to witness a performance of Voltaire's tragedy of "*Zaïre*," the principal part being played by the first of European tragedians, Salvini. The proceeds, amounting to six thousand francs, were given to the schools of Rome.¹

¹ London Times, Letter from Rome, of May 31, 1878.

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