

Marx Hardy Machiavelli Joyce Austen
Defoe Abbot Melville Montaigne Cooper Emerson Hugo
Stoker Wilde Christie Maupassant Haggard Chesterton Molière Eliot Grimm
Garnett Engels Schiller Byron Maupassant Schiller
Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka
Cotton Dostoyevsky Dostoyevsky Smith Willis
Baum Henry Kipling Doyle Henry Willis
Leslie Dumas Flaubert Nietzsche Turgenev Balzac
Stockton Vatsyayana Crane
Burroughs Verne
Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Vinci
Homer Tolstoy Whitman Gogol Busch
Darwin Thoreau Twain Plato Scott
Potter Zola Lawrence Dickens Plato Scott
Kant Freud Jowett Stevenson Dickens Plato Scott
Andersen Andersen Cervantes Burton Hesse Harte
London Descartes Wells Voltaire Cooke
Poe Aristotle Wells Voltaire Cooke
Hale James Hastings Shakespeare Chamberlain Irving
Bunner Shakespeare Chamberlain Irving
Richter Chekhov da Shakespeare Chamberlain Irving
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Swift Chekhov Pushkin Alcott
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Memoirs of Madame de Montespan –Volume 3

Françoise-Athénaïs de Rochechouart de Mortemart,
marquise de Montespan

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Author: Françoise-Athénaïs de Rochechouart de Mortemart,
marquise de Montespan

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**MEMOIRS OF MADAME LA MARQUISE DE
MONTESPAN**

Written by Herself

Being the Historic Memoirs of the Court of Louis XIV.

BOOK 3.

CHAPTER XXXV.

M. de Lauzun and Mademoiselle de Montpensier. — Marriage of the One and Passion of the Other. — The King Settles a Match. — A Secret Union. — The King Sends M. de Lauzun to Pignerol. — The Life He Leads There. — Mademoiselle's Liberality. — Strange Way of Acknowledging It.

They are forever talking about the coquetry of women; men also have their coquetry, but as they show less grace and finesse than we do, they do not get half as much attention.

The Marquis de Lauzun, having one day, noticed a certain kindly feeling for him in the glances of Mademoiselle, endeavoured to seem to her every day more fascinating and agreeable. The foolish Princess completely fell into the snare, and suddenly giving up her air of noble indifference, which till then had made her life happy, she fell madly in love with a schemer who despised and detested her.

Held back for some months by her pride, as also by the exigencies of etiquette, she only disclosed her sentimental passion by glances and a mutual exchange of signs of approval; but at last she was tired of self-restraint and martyrdom, and, detaining M. de Lauzun one day in a recess, she placed her written offer of marriage in his hand.

The cunning Marquis feigned astonishment, pretending humbly to renounce such honour, while increasing his wiles and fascinations; he even went so far as to shed tears, his most difficult feat of all.

Mademoiselle de Montpensier, older than he by twelve or fourteen years, never suspected that such a disparity of years was visible in her face. When one has been pretty, one imagines that one is still so, and will forever remain so. Plastered up and powdered, consumed by passion, and above all, blinded by vanity, she fancied that Nature had to obey princes, and that, to favour her, Time would stay his flight.

Though tired and bored with everything, Lauzun, the better to excite her passion, put on timid, languid airs, like those of some lad fresh from school. Quitting the embraces of some other woman, he played the lonely, pensive, melancholy bachelor, the man absorbed by this sweet, new mystery of love.

Having made mutual avowal of their passion, which was full of esteem, Lauzun inquired, merely from motives of caution, as to the Princess's fortune; and she did not fail to tell him everything, even about her plate and jewels. Lauzun's love grew even more ardent now, for she had at least forty millions, not counting her palace.

He asked if, by the marriage, he would become a prince, and she replied that she, herself, had not sufficient power to do this; that she was most anxious to arrange this, if she could; but anyhow, that she could make him Duc de Montpensier, with a private uncontrolled income of five hundred thousand livres.

He asked if, on the family coat-of-arms, the husband's coronet was to figure, or the wife's; but, as she would not change her name, her arms, she decided, could remain as heretofore,—the crown, the fleur-de-lis, and so forth.

He inquired if the children of the marriage would rank as princes, and she said that she saw nothing to prevent this. He also asked if he would be raised higher in the peerage, and might look to being made a prince at last, and styled Highness as soon as the contract had been signed.

This caused some doubt and reflection. "The King, my cousin," said Mademoiselle, "is somewhat strict in matters of this sort. He seems to think that the royal family is a new arch-saint, at whom one may look only when prostrate in adoration; all contract there-

with is absolutely forbidden. I begin to feel uneasy about this; yes, Lauzun, I have fears for our love and marriage."

"Are you, then, afraid?" asked Lauzun, quite crestfallen.

"I knew how to point the Bastille cannon at the troops of the King," she replied; "but he was very young then. No matter, I will go and see him; if he is my King, I am his cousin; if he has his crotchets, I have my love and my will. He can't do anything, my dear Lauzun; I love you as once he loved La Valliere, as to-day he loves Montespan; I am not afraid of him. As for the permission, I know our history by heart, and I will prove to him by a hundred examples that, from the time of Charlemagne up to the present time, widows and daughters of kings have married mere noblemen. These nobleman may have been most meritorious,—I only know them from history,—but not one of them was as worthy as you."

So saying, she asked for her fan, her gloves, and her horses, and attended by her grooms-in-waiting, she went to the King in person.

The King listened to her from beginning to end, and then remarked, "You refused the Kings of Denmark, Portugal, Spain, and England, and you wish to marry my captain of the guard, the Marquis de Lauzun?"

"Yes, Sire, for I place him above all monarchs,—yourself alone excepted."

"Do you love him immensely?"

"More than I can possibly say; a thousand, a hundred thousand times more than myself."

"Do you think he is equally devoted to you?"—"That would be impossible," she tranquilly answered; "but his love for me is delicate, tender; and such friendship suffices me."

"My cousin, in all that there is self-interest. I entreat you to reflect. The world, as you know, is a mocking world; you want to excite universal derision and injure the respect which is due to the place that I fill."

"Ah, Sire, do not wound me! I fling myself at your feet. Have compassion upon M. de Lauzun, and pity my tears. Do not exercise

your power; let him be the consolation of my life; let me marry him."

The King, no longer able to hide his disgust and impatience, said, "Cousin, you are now a good forty-four years old; at that age you ought to be able to take care of yourself. Spare me all your grievances, and do what pleases you."

On leaving Mademoiselle, he came to my apartment and told me about all this nonsense. I then informed him of what I had heard by letter the day before. Lauzun, while still carrying on with the fastest ladies of the Court and the town, had just wheedled the Princess into making him a present of twenty millions,—a most extravagant gift.

"This is too much!" exclaimed the King; and he at once caused a letter to be despatched to Mademoiselle and her lover, telling them that their intimacy must cease, and that things must go no farther.

But the audacious Lauzun found means to suborn a well-meaning simpleton of a priest, who married them secretly the very same day.

The King's indignation and resentment may well be imagined. He had his captain of the guard arrested and sent as a prisoner to Pignerol.

On this occasion, M. de Lauzun complained bitterly of me; he invented the most absurd tales about me, even saying that he had struck me in my own apartments, after taunting me to my face with "our old intimacy."

That is false; he reproached me with nothing, for there was nothing to reproach. Shortly after the Princess's grand scene, he came and begged me to intercede on his behalf. I only made a sort of vague promise, and he knew well enough that, in the great world, a vague promise is the same as a refusal.

For more than six months I had to stanch the tears and assuage the grief of Mademoiselle. So tiresome to me did this prove, that she alone well-nigh sufficed to make me quit the Court.

Such sorrowing and chagrin made her lose the little beauty that still remained to her; nothing seemed more incongruous and ridicu-

lous than to hear this elderly grand lady talking perpetually about "her dearest darling, the prisoner."

At the time I write he is at Pignerol; his bad disposition is forever getting him into trouble. She sends him lots of money unknown to the King, who generally knows everything. All this money he squanders or gambles away, and when funds are low, says, "The old lady will send us some."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Hyde, the Chancellor. — Misfortune Not Always Misfortune. —
Prince

Comnenus. — The King at Petit-Bourg. — His Incognito. — Who M. de
Vivonne

Really Was.

The castle of Petit-Bourg, of which the King made me a present, is situate on a height overlooking the Seine, whence one may get the loveliest of views. So pleasant did I find this charming abode, that I repaired thither as often as possible, and stayed for five or six days. One balmy summer night, I sat in my dressing-gown at the central balcony, watching the stars, as was my wont, asking myself whether I should not be a thousand times happier if I should pass my life in a retreat like this, and so have time to contemplate the glorious works of Nature, and to prepare myself for that separation which sooner or later awaited me. Reason bade me encourage such thoughts, yet my heart offered opposition thereto, urging that there was something terrifying in solitude, most of all here, amid vast fields and meadows, and that, away from the Court and all my friends, I should grow old, and death would take me before my time. While plunged in such thoughts, I suddenly heard the sound of a tocsin, and scanning the horizon, I saw flames and smoke rising from some hamlet or country-house. I rang for my servants, and told them instantly to despatch horsemen to the scene of the catastrophe, and bring back news.

The messengers started off, and soon came back to say that the fire had broken out at the residence of my lord Hyde, Chancellor of England, who was but lately convalescent. They had seen him lying upon a rug on the grass, some little distance from the burning mansion. I forthwith ordered my carriage to be sent for him, and

charged my surgeon and secretary to invite him to take shelter at my castle.

My lord gratefully accepted the invitation; he entered my room as the clock struck twelve. As yet he could not tell the cause of the disaster, and in a calm, patriarchal manner observed, "I am a man marked out for great misfortune. God forbid, madame, that the mischance which dogs my footsteps touch you also!"

"I cannot bear to see a fire," said I, in reply to the English nobleman, "for some dreadful accident always results therefrom. Yet, on the whole, they are of good augury, and I am sure, my lord, that your health or your affairs will benefit by this accident."

Hearing me talk thus, my lord smiled. He only took some slight refreshment,—a little soup,—and heard me give orders for all my available servants to be sent to the scene of disaster, in order to save all his furniture, and protect it as well.

After repeated expressions of his gratitude, he desired to withdraw, and retired to rest. Next day we learnt that the fire had been got under about one o'clock in the morning; one wing only of the chateau had been destroyed, and the library, together with all the linen and plate, was well-nigh intact. Lord Hyde was very glad to hear the news. They told him that all the labourers living near had gladly come to the help of his servants and mine. As his private cashbox had been saved, owing to their vigilance and honesty, he promised to distribute its contents among them when he returned.

Hardly had he got the words out, when they came to tell me that, on the highroad, just in front of my gates, a carriage, bound for Paris, had the traces broken, and the travellers persons of distinction begged the favour of my hospitality for a short while. I consented with pleasure, and they went back to take the travellers my answer.

"You see, madame," said the Chancellor, "my bad luck is contagious; no sooner have I set foot in this enchanting abode than its atmosphere deteriorates. A travelling-carriage passes rapidly by in front of the gates, when lo! some invisible hand breaks it to pieces, and stops it from proceeding any further."

Then I replied, "But how do you know, monsieur, that this mishap may not prove a most agreeable adventure for the travellers to

whom we are about to give shelter? To begin with, they will have the honour of making your acquaintance, and to meet with an illustrious person is no common or frivolous event."

The servants announced the Princes Comnenus, who immediately entered the salon. Though dressed in travelling-costume, with embroidered gaiters, in the Greek fashion, it was easy to see what they were. The son, a lad of fourteen, was presented to me by his father, and when both were seated, I introduced them to the Chancellor.

"The name is well known," observed the Prince, "even in Greece. My lord married his daughter to the heir-presumptive to the English throne, and England, being by nature ungrateful, has distressed this worthy parent, while robbing him of all his possessions."

At these words Lord Hyde became greatly affected; he could not restrain his tears, and fearing at first to compromise himself, he told us that his exile was voluntary and self-imposed, or very nearly so.

After complimenting the Chancellor of a great kingdom, Prince Comnenus thought that he ought to say something courteous and flattering to myself.

"Madame," quoth he, "it is only now, after asking for hospitality and generously obtaining it, that I and my son have learnt the name of the lady who has so graciously granted us admission to this most lovely place. For a moment we hesitated in awe. But now our eyes behold her whom all Europe admires, whom a great King favours with his friendship and confidence. What strange chances befall one in life! Could I ever have foreseen so fortunate a mishap!"

I briefly replied to this amiable speech, and invited the travellers to spend, at least, one day with us. They gladly accepted, and each retired to his apartment until the time came for driving out. Dinner was laid, and on the point of being served, when the King, who was on his way from Fontainebleau, suddenly entered my room. He had heard something about a fire, and came to see what had happened. I at once informed him, telling him, moreover, that I had the Duke of York's father-in-law staying with me at the moment.

"Lord Hyde, the Chancellor?" exclaimed the King. "I have never seen him, and have always been desirous to make his acquaintance. The opportunity is an easy and favourable one."

"But that is not all, Sire; I have other guests to meet you," said I.

"And who may they be?" inquired the King, smiling. "Just because I have come in rough-and-ready plight, your house is full of people."

"But they are in rough-and-ready plight as well," I answered; "so your Majesties must mutually excuse each other."

"Are you in fun or in earnest?" asked his Majesty. "Have you really got some king stowed away in one of your rooms?"

"Not a king, Sire, but an emperor, — the Emperor of Constantino-ple and Trebizond, accompanied by the Prince Imperial, his son. You shall see two Greek profiles of the best sort, two finely cut noses, albeit hooked, and almond-shaped eyes, like those of Achilles and Agamemnon."

Then the King said, "Send for your groom of the chambers at once, and tell him to give orders that my incognito be strictly observed. You must introduce me to these dignitaries as your brother, M. de Vivonne. Under these conditions, I will join your party at table; otherwise, I should be obliged to leave the castle immediately."

The King's wishes were promptly complied with; the footmen were let into the secret, and I introduced "Monsieur de Vivonne" to my guests.

The talk, without being sparkling, was pleasant enough until desert. When the men-servants left us, it assumed a very different character. The King induced the Chancellor to converse, and asked him if his exile were owing to the English monarch personally, or to some parliamentary intrigue.

"King Charles," replied his lordship, "is a prince to gauge whose character requires long study. Apparently, he is the very soul of candour, but no one is more deceitful than he. He fawns and smiles

upon you when in his heart of hearts he despises and loathe you. When the Duke of York, unfortunately, became violently enamoured of my daughter, he did not conceal his attachment from his brother, the King, and at last asked for his approval to join his fortunes to my daughter's, when the King, without offering opposition, contented himself by pointing out the relative distance between their rank and position; to which the Duke replied, 'But at one time you did everything you possibly could to get Olympia Mancini, who was merely Mazarin's niece!' And King Charles, who could not deny this, left his brother complete liberty of action.

"As my daughter was far dearer and more precious to me than social grandeur, I begged the Duke of York to find for himself a partner of exalted rank. He gave way to despair, and spoke of putting an end to his existence; in fact, he behaved as all lovers do whom passion touches to madness; so this baleful marriage took place. God is my witness that I opposed it, urged thereto by wisdom, by modesty, and by foresight. Now, as you see, from that cruel moment I have been exiled to alien lands, robbed of the sight of my beloved child, who has been raised to the rank of a princess, and whom I shall never see again. Why did my sovereign not say to me frankly, I do not like this marriage; you must oppose it, Chancellor, to please me?

"How different was his conduct from that of his cousin, the French King! Mademoiselle d'Orleans wanted to make an unsuitable match; the King opposed it, as he had a right to do, and the marriage did not take place."

My "brother," the King, smiled as he told his lordship he was right.

Prince Comnenus was of the same opinion, and, being expressly invited to do so, he briefly recounted his adventures, and stated the object of his journey to Paris.

"The whole world," said he, "is aware of the great misfortunes of my family. The Emperors Andronicus and Michael Comnenus, driven from the throne of Constantinople, left their names within the heart and memory of Greece; they had ruled the West with a gentle sceptre, and in a people's grateful remembrance they had their reward. My ancestors, their descendants, held sway in Trebi-

zond, a quicksand which gave way beneath their tread. From adversity to adversity, from country to country, we were finally driven to seclusion in the Isle of Candia, part of the quondam Minos territory. Venice had allowed Candia to fall before Mahomet's bloody sword. Europe lost her bulwark, the Cross of the Saviour was thrown down, and the Candian Christians have been massacred or forced to flee. I have left in the hands of the conqueror my fields and forests, my summer palace, my winter palace, and my gardens filled with the produce of America, Asia, and Europe. From this overwhelming disaster I managed to save my son; and as my sole fortune I brought away with me the large jewels of Andronicus, his ivory and sapphire sceptre, his scimitar of Lemnos, and his ancient gold crown, which once encircled Theseus's brow.

"These noble relics I shall present to the King of France. They say that he is humane, generous, fond of glory, and zealous in the cause of justice. When before his now immovable throne he sees laid down these last relics of an ancient race, perhaps he will be touched by so lamentable a downfall, and will not suffer distress to trouble my last days, and darken the early years of this my child."

During this speech I kept watching the King's face. I saw that he was interested, then touched, and at last was on the point of forgetting his incognito and of appearing in his true character.

"Prince," said he to the Greek traveller, "my duties and my devotion make it easy for me to approach the King of France's person very closely. In four or five days he will be leaving Fontainebleau for his palace at Saint Germain. I will tell him without modification all that I have just heard from you. Without being either prophet or seer, I can guarantee that you will be well received and cordially welcomed, receiving such benefits as kings are bound to yield to kings.

"Madame, who respects and is interested in you, is desirous, I feel certain, for me to persuade you to stay here until her departure; she enjoys royal favour, and it is my sister herself who shall present you at Court. You shall show her, you shall show us all, the golden crown of Theseus, the sceptre of Adronicus, and this brow which I gaze upon and revere, for it deserves a kingly diamond.

"As for you, my lord," said his Majesty to the English nobleman, "if the misfortune of last night prove disastrous in more ways than one, pray wait for a while before you go back to the smouldering ashes of a half-extinguished fire. My sister takes pleasure in your company; indeed, the Marquise is charmed to be able to entertain three such distinguished guests, and begs to place her chateau at your disposal until such time as your own shall be restored. We shall speak of you to the King, and he will certainly endeavour to induce King Charles, his cousin, to recall you to your native country."

Then, after saying one or two words to me in private, he bowed to the gentlemen and withdrew. We went out on to the balcony to see him get into his coach, when, to the surprise and astonishment of my guests, as the carriage passed along the avenue, about a hundred peasants, grouped near the gateway, threw off their hats and cried, "Long live the King!"

Prince Comnenus and his son were inconsolable; I excused myself by saying that it was at the express desire of our royal visitor, and my lord admitted that at last he recollected his features, and recognised him by his grand and courtly address.

Before I end my tale, do not let me forget to say that the King strongly recommended Prince Comnenus to the Republic of Genoa, and obtained for him considerable property in Corsica and a handsome residence at Ajaccio. He accepted five or six beautiful jewels that had belonged to Andronicus, and caused the sum of twelve hundred thousand francs to be paid to the young Comnenus from his treasury.

