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Stoker Wilde Christie Maupassant Haggard Chesterton Molière Eliot Grimm
Garnett Engels Schiller Byron Maupassant Schiller
Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka
Cotton Dostoyevsky Kipling Doyle Willis
Baum Henry Nietzsche Hall
Leslie Dumas Flaubert Turgenev Balzac Willis
Stockton Vatsyayana Crane
Burroughs Verne
Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Busch
Homer Tolstoy Whittman Twain
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Potter Freud Jowett Stevenson Dickens Scott
Kant Andersen London Descartes Cervantes Burton Harte
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**Memoirs of the Courts of Louis
XV and XVI. Being secret memoirs
of Madame Du Hausset, lady's
maid to Madame de Pompadour,
and of the Princess Lamballe –
Volume 6**

Mme. Du Hausset

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MEMOIRS OF LOUIS XV. AND XVI.

Being Secret Memoirs of Madame du Hausset, Lady's Maid to Madame de Pompadour, and of an unknown English Girl and the Princess Lamballe

BOOK 6.

SECTION IV.

"The dismissal of M. Necker irritated the people beyond description. They looked upon themselves as insulted in their favourite. Mob succeeded mob, each more mischievous and daring than the former. The Duc d'Orleans continued busy in his work of secret destruction. In one of the popular risings, a sabre struck his bust, and its head fell, severed from its body. Many of the rioters (for the ignorant are always superstitious) shrunk back at this omen of evil to their idol. His real friends endeavoured to deduce a salutary warning to him from the circumstance. I was by when the Duc de Penthièvre told him, in the presence of his daughter, that he might look upon this accident as prophetic of the fate of his own head, as well as the ruin of his family, if he persisted. He made no answer, but left the room.

"On the 14th of July, and two or three days preceding, the commotions took a definite object. The destruction of the Bastille was the point proposed, and it was achieved. Arms were obtained from the old pensioners at the Hotel des Invalides. Fifty thousand livres were distributed among the chiefs of those who influenced the Invalides to give up the arms.

"The massacre of the Marquis de Launay, commandant of the place, and of M. de Flesselles, and the fall of the citadel itself, were the consequence.

"Her Majesty was greatly affected when she heard of the murder of these officers and the taking of the Bastille. She frequently told me that the horrid circumstance originated in a diabolical Court intrigue, but never explained the particulars of the intrigue. She declared that both the officers and the citadel might have been saved had not the King's orders for the march of the troops from

Versailles, and the environs of Paris, been disobeyed. She blamed the precipitation of De Launay in ordering up the drawbridge and directing the few troops on it to fire upon the people. 'There,' she added, 'the Marquis committed himself; as, in case of not succeeding, he could have no retreat, which every commander should take care to secure, before he allows the commencement of a general attack.'

[Certainly, the French Revolution may date its epoch as far back as the taking of the Bastille; from that moment the troubles progressively continued, till the final extirpation of its illustrious victims. I was just returning from a mission to England when the storms began to threaten not only the most violent effects to France itself, but to all the land which was not divided from it by the watery element. The spirit of liberty, as the vine, which produces the most luxurious fruit, when abused becomes the most pernicious poison, was stalking abroad and revelling in blood and massacre. I myself was a witness to the enthusiastic national ball given on the ruins of the Bastille, while it was still stained and reeking with the hot blood of its late keeper, whose head I saw carried in triumph. Such was the effect on me that the Princesse de Lamballe asked me if I had known the Marquis de Launay. I answered in the negative; but told her from the knowledge I had of the English Revolution, I was fearful of a result similar to what followed the fall of the heads of Buckingham and Stafford. The Princess mentioning my observation to the Duc de Penthièvre, they both burst into tears.]

The death of the Dauphin, the horrible Revolution of the 14th of July, the troubles about Necker, the insults and threats offered to the Comte d'Artois and herself,—overwhelmed the Queen with the most poignant grief.]

"She was most desirous of some understanding being established between the government and the representatives of the people, which she urged upon the King the expediency of personally attempting.

"The King, therefore, at her reiterated remonstrances and requests, presented himself, on the following day, with his brothers, to the National Assembly, to assure them of his firm determination to support the measures of the deputies, in everything conducive to

the general good of his subjects. As a proof of his intentions, he said he had commanded the troops to leave Paris and Versailles.

"The King left the Assembly, as he had gone thither, on foot, amid the vociferations of 'Vive le roi!' and it was only through the enthusiasm of the deputies, who thus hailed His Majesty, and followed him in crowds to the palace, that the Comte d'Artois escaped the fury of an outrageous mob.

"The people filled every avenue of the palace, which vibrated with cries for the King, the Queen, and the Dauphin to show themselves at the balcony.

"Send for the Duchesse de Polignac to bring the royal children," cried I to Her Majesty.

"Not for the world!" exclaimed the Queen. "She will be assassinated, and my children too, if she make her appearance before this infuriated mob. Let Madame and the Dauphin be brought unaccompanied."

"The Queen, on this occasion, imitated her Imperial mother, Maria Theresa. She took the Dauphin in her arms, and Madame by her side, as that Empress had done when she presented herself to the Hungarian magnates; but the reception here was very different. It was not 'moriatur pro nostra regina'. Not that they were ill received; but the furious party of the Duc d'Orleans often interrupted the cries of 'Vive le roi! Vive la reine!' etc., with those of 'Vive la nation! Vive d'Orleans!' and many severe remarks on the family of the De Polignacs, which proved that the Queen's caution on this occasion was exceedingly well-judged.

"Not to wound the feelings of the Duchesse de Polignac, I kept myself at a distance behind the Queen; but I was loudly called for by the mob, and, 'malgre moi', was obliged, at the King and Queen's request, to come forward.

"As I approached the balcony, I perceived one of the well-known agents of the Duc d'Orleans, whom I had noticed some time before in the throng, menacing me, the moment I made my appearance, with his upreared hand in fury. I was greatly terrified, but suppressed my agitation, and saluted the populace; but, fearful of exhibiting my weakness in sight of the wretch who had alarmed me,

withdrew instantly, and had no sooner re-entered than I sunk motionless in the arms of one of the attendants. Luckily, this did not take place till I left the balcony. Had it been otherwise, the triumph to my declared enemies would have been too great.

"Recovering, I found myself surrounded by the Royal Family, who were all kindness and concern for my situation; but I could not subdue my tremor and affright. The horrid image of that monster seemed, still to threaten me.

"Come, come!" said the King, "be not alarmed, I shall order a council of all the Ministers and deputies to-morrow, who will soon put an end to these riots!"

"We were ere long joined by the Prince de Conde, the Duc de Bourbon, and others, who implored the King not to part with the army, but to place himself, with all the Princes of the blood, at its head, as the only means to restore tranquillity to the country, and secure his own safety.

"The Queen was decidedly of the same opinion; and added, that, if the army were to depart, the King and his family ought to go with it; but the King, on the contrary, said he would not decide upon any measures whatever till he had heard the opinion of the Council.

"The Queen, notwithstanding the King's indecision, was occupied, during the rest of the day and the whole of the night, in preparing for her intended; journey, as she hoped to persuade the King to follow the advice of the Princes, and not wait the result of the next day's deliberation. Nay, so desirous was she of this, that she threw herself on her knees to the King, imploring him to leave Versailles and head the army, and offering to accompany him herself, on horseback, in uniform; but it was like speaking to a corpse he never answered.

"The Duchesse de Polignac came to Her Majesty in a state of the greatest agitation, in consequence of M. de Chinon having just apprised her that a most malicious report had been secretly spread among the deputies at Versailles that they were all to be blown up at their next meeting.

"The Queen was as much surprised as the Duchess, and scarcely less agitated. These wretched friends could only, in silence, compare

notes of their mutual cruel misfortunes. Both for a time remained speechless at this new calamity. Surely this was not wanting to be added to those by which the Queen was already so bitterly oppressed.

"I was sent for by Her Majesty. Count Fersen accompanied me. He had just communicated to me what the Duchess had already repeated from M. Chinon to the Queen.

"The rumour had been set afloat merely as a new pretext for the continuation of the riots.

"The communication of the report, so likely to produce a disastrous effect, took place while the King was with his Ministers deliberating whether he should go to Paris, or save himself and family by joining the army.

"His Majesty was called from the council to the Queen's apartment, and was there made acquainted with the circumstance which had so awakened the terror of the royal party. He calmly replied, 'It is some days since this invention has been spread among the deputies; I was aware of it from the first; but from its being utterly impossible to be listened to for a moment by any one, I did not wish to afflict you by the mention of an impotent fabrication, which I myself treated with the contempt it justly merited. Nevertheless, I did not forget, yesterday, in the presence of both my brothers, who accompanied me to the National Assembly, there to exculpate myself from an imputation at which my nature revolts; and, from the manner in which it was received, I flatter myself that every honest Frenchman was fully satisfied that my religion will ever be an insurmountable barrier against my harbouring sentiments allied in the slightest degree to such actions.

"The King embraced the Queen, begged she would tranquilise herself, calmed the fears of the two ladies, thanked the gentlemen for the interest they took in his favour, and returned to the council, who, in his absence, had determined on his going to the Hotel de Ville at Paris, suggesting at the same time the names of several persons likely to be well received, if His Majesty thought proper to allow their accompanying him.

"During this interval, the Queen, still flattering herself that she should pursue her wished-for journey, ordered the carriages to be prepared and sent off to Rambouillet, where she said she should sleep; but this Her Majesty only stated for the purpose of distracting the attention of her pages and others about her from her real purpose. As it was well known that M. de St. Priest had pointed out Rambouillet as a fit asylum for the mob, she fancied that an understanding on the part of her suite that they were to halt there, and prepare for her reception, would protect her project of proceeding much farther.

"When the council had broken up and the King returned, he said to the Queen, 'It is decided.'

"'To go, I hope?' said Her Majesty.

"'No'—(though in appearance calm, the words remained on the lips of the King, and he stood for some moments incapable of utterance; but, recovering, added)—'To Paris!'

"The Queen, at the word Paris, became frantic. She flung herself wildly into the arms of her friends.

"'Nous sommes perdus! nous sommes perdus!' cried she, in a passion of tears. But her dread was not for herself. She felt only for the danger to which the King was now going to expose himself; and she flew to him, and hung on his neck.

"'And what,' exclaimed she, 'is to become of all our faithful friends and attendants!'

"'I advise them all,' answered His Majesty, 'to make the best of their way out of France; and that as soon as possible.'

"By this time, the apartments of the Queen were filled with the attendants and the royal children, anxiously expecting every moment to receive the Queen's command to proceed on their journey, but they were all ordered to retire to whence they came.

"The scene was that of a real tragedy. Nothing broke the silence but groans of the deepest affliction. Our consternation at the counter order cast all into a state of stupefied insensibility.

"The Queen was the only one whose fortitude bore her up proudly under this weight of misfortunes. Recovering from the frenzy of the first impression, she adjured her friends, by the love and obedience they had ever shown her and the King, to prepare immediately to fulfil his mandate and make themselves ready for the cruel separation!

"The Duchesse de Polignac and myself were, for some hours, in a state of agony and delirium.

"When the Queen saw the body-guards drawn up to accompany the King's departure, she ran to the window, threw apart the sash, and was going to speak to them, to recommend the King to their care; but the Count Fersen prevented it.

"For God's sake, Madame,' — exclaimed he, 'do not commit yourself to the suspicion of having any doubts of the people!'

"When the King entered to take leave of her, and of all his most faithful attendants, he could only articulate, 'Adieu!' But when the Queen saw him accompanied by the Comte d'Estaing and others, whom, from their new principles, she knew to be popular favourites, she had command enough of herself not to shed a tear in their presence.

"No sooner, however, had the King left the room than it was as much as the Count Fersen, Princesse Elizabeth, and all of us could do to recover her from the most violent convulsions. At last, coming to herself, she retired with the Princess, the Duchess, and myself to await the King's return; at the same time requesting the Count Fersen to follow His Majesty to the Hotel de Ville. Again and again she implored the Count, as she went, in case the King should be detained, to interest himself with all the foreign Ministers to interpose for his liberation.

"Versailles, when the King was gone, seemed like a city deserted in consequence of the plague. The palace was completely abandoned. All the attendants were dispersed. No one was seen in the streets. Terror prevailed. It was universally believed that the King would be detained in Paris. The high road from Versailles to Paris was crowded with all ranks of people, as if to catch a last look of their Sovereign.

"The Count Fersen set off instantly, pursuant to the Queen's desire. He saw all that passed, and on his return related to me the history of that horrid day.

"He arrived at Paris just in time to see His Majesty take the national cockade from M. Bailly and place it in his hat. He, felt the Hotel de Ville shake with the long-continued cries of 'Vive le roi!' in consequence, which so affected the King that, for some moments, he was unable to express himself. 'I myself,' added the Count, 'was so moved at the effect on His Majesty, in being thus warmly received by his Parisian subjects, which portrayed the paternal emotions of his long-lacerated heart, that every other feeling was paralysed for a moment, in exultation at the apparent unanimity between the Sovereign and his people. But it did not,' continued the Ambassador, 'paralyse the artful tongue of Bailly, the Mayor of Paris. I could have kicked the fellow for his malignant impudence; for, even in the cunning compliment he framed, he studied to humble the afflicted Monarch by telling the people it was to them he owed the sovereign authority.

"'But,' pursued the Count, 'considering the situation of Louis XVI. and that of his family, agonised as they must have been during his absence, from the Queen's impression that the Parisians would never again allow him to see Versailles, how great was our rapture when we saw him safely replaced in his carriage, and returning to those who were still lamenting him as lost!

"'When I left Her Majesty in the morning, she was nearly in a state of mental aberration. When I saw her again in the evening, the King by her side, surrounded by her family, the Princesse Eizabeth, and yourself, madame' said the kind Count, 'she appeared to me like a person risen from the dead and restored to life. Her excess of joy at the first moment was beyond description!

"Count Fersen might well say the first moment, for the pleasure of the Queen was of short duration. Her heart was doomed to bleed afresh, when the thrill of delight, at what she considered the escape of her husband, was past, for she had already seen her chosen friend, the Duchesse de Polignac, for the last time.

"Her Majesty was but just recovered from the effects of the morning's agitation, when the Duchess, the Duke, his sister, and all his

family set off. It was impossible for her to take leave of her friend. The hour was late—about midnight. At the same time departed the Comte d'Artois and his family, the Prince de Conde and his, the Prince of Hesse d'Armstadt, and all those who were likely to be suspected by the people.

"Her Majesty desired the Count Fersen to see the Duchess in her name.

When the King heard the request, he exclaimed:

"What a cruel state for Sovereigns, my dear Count! To be compelled to separate ourselves from our most faithful attendants, and not be allowed, for fear of compromising others or our own lives, to take a last farewell!"

"Ah!" said the Queen, "I fear so too. I fear it is a last farewell to all our friends!"

The Count saw the Duchess a few moments before she left Versailles. Pisani, the Venetian Ambassador, and Count Fersen, helped her on the coachbox, where she rode disguised.

"What must have been most poignantly mortifying to the fallen favourite was, that, in the course of her journey, she met with her greatest enemy, (Necker) who was returning, triumphant, to Paris, called by the voice of that very nation by whom she and her family were now forced from its territory,—Necker, who himself conceived that she, who now went by him into exile, while he himself returned to the greatest of victories, had thwarted all his former plans of operation, and, from her influence over the Queen, had caused his dismissal and temporary banishment.

"For my own part, I cannot but consider this sudden desertion of France by those nearest the throne as ill-judged. Had all the Royal Family, remained, is it likely that the King and Queen would have been watched with such despotic vigilance? Would not confidence have created confidence, and the breach have been less wide between the King and his people?"

"When the father and his family will now be thoroughly reconciled, Heaven alone can tell!"

SECTION V.

"Barnave often lamented his having been betrayed, by a love of notoriety, into many schemes, of which his impetuosity blinded him to the consequences. With tears in his eyes, he implored me to impress the Queen's mind with the sad truths he inculcated. He said his motives had been uniformly the same, however he might have erred in carrying them into action; but now he relied on my friendship for my royal mistress to give efficacy to his earnest desire to atone for those faults, of which he had become convinced by dear-bought experience. He gave me a list of names for Her Majesty, in which were specified all the Jacobins who had emissaries throughout France, for the purpose of creating on the same day, and at the same hour, an alarm of something like the 'Vesparo Siciliano' (a general insurrection to murder all the nobility and burn their palaces, which, in fact, took place in many parts of France), the object of which was to give the Assembly, by whom all the regular troops were disbanded, a pretext for arming the people as a national guard, thus creating a perpetual national faction.

"The hordes of every faubourg now paraded in this new democratic livery. Even some of them, who were in the actual service of the Court, made no scruple of decorating themselves thus, in the very face of their Sovereign. The King complained, but the answer made to him was that the nation commanded.

"The very first time Their Majesties went to the royal chapel, after the embodying of the troops with the national guards, all the persons belonging to it were accoutred in the national uniform. The Queen was highly incensed, and deeply affected at this insult offered to the King's authority by the persons employed in the sacred occupations of the Church. 'Such persons,' said Her Majesty, 'would, I had hoped, have been the last to interfere with politics.' She was about to order all those who preferred their uniforms to their employments to be discharged from the King's service; but my advice, coupled with that of Barnave, dissuaded her from executing

so dangerous a threat. On being assured that those, perhaps, who might be selected to replace the offenders might refuse the service, if not allowed the same ridiculous prerogatives, and thus expose Their Royal Majesties to double mortification, the Queen seemed satisfied, and no more was said upon the subject, except to an Italian soprano, to whom the King signified his displeasure at his singing a 'salva regina' in the dress of a grenadier of the new faction.

"The singer took the hint and never again intruded his uniform into the chapel.

"Necker, notwithstanding the enthusiasm his return produced upon the people, felt mortified in having lost the confidence of the King. He came to me, exclaiming that, unless Their Majesties distinguished him by some mark of their royal favour, his influence must be lost with the National Assembly. He perceived, he said, that the councils of the King were more governed by the advice of the Queen's favourite, the Abbe Vermond, than by his (Necker's). He begged I would assure Her Majesty that Vermond was quite as obnoxious to the people as the Duchesse de Polignac had ever been; for it was generally known that Her Majesty was completely guided by him, and, therefore, for her own safety and the tranquillity of national affairs, he humbly suggested the prudence of sending him from the Court, at least for a time.

"I was petrified at hearing a Minister dare presume thus to dictate the line of conduct which the Queen of France, his Sovereign, should pursue with respect to her most private servants. Such was my indignation at this cruel wish to dismiss every object of her choice, especially one from whom, owing to long habits of intimacy since her childhood, a separation would be rendered, by her present situation, peculiarly cruel, that nothing but the circumstances in which the Court then stood could have given me patience to listen to him.

"I made no answer. Upon my silence, Necker subjoined, 'You must perceive, Princess, that I am actuated for the general good of the nation.'

"'And I hope, monsieur, for the prerogatives of the monarchy also,' replied I.

"Certainly,' said Necker. 'But if Their Majesties continue to be guided by others, and will not follow my advice, I cannot answer for the consequences.'

"I assured the Minister that I would be the faithful bearer of his commission, however unpleasant.

"Knowing the character of the Queen, in not much relishing being dictated to with respect to her conduct in relation to the persons of her household, especially the Abbe Vermond, and aware, at the same time, of her dislike to Necker, who thus undertook to be her director, I felt rather awkward in being the medium of the Minister's suggestions. But what was my surprise, on finding her prepared, and totally indifferent as to the privation.

"I foresaw,' replied Her Majesty, 'that Vermond would become odious to the present order of things, merely because he had been a faithful servant, and long attached to my interest; but you may tell M. Necker that the Abbe leaves Versailles this very night, by my express order, for Vienna.'

"If the proposal of Necker astonished me, the Queen's reception of it astonished me still more. What a lesson is this for royal favourites! The man who had been her tutor, and who, almost from her childhood, never left her, the constant confidant for fifteen or sixteen years, was now sent off without a seeming regret.

"I doubt not, however, that the Queen had some very powerful secret motive for the sudden change in her conduct towards the Abbe, for she was ever just in all her concerns, even to her avowed enemies; but I was happy that she seemed to express no particular regret at the Minister's suggested policy. I presume, from the result, that I myself had overrated the influence of the Abbe over the mind of his royal pupil; that he had by no means the sway imputed to him; and that Marie Antoinette merely considered him as the necessary instrument of her private correspondence, which he had wholly managed.

[The truth is, Her Majesty had already taken leave of the Abbe, in the presence of the King, unknown to the Princess; or, more properly, the Abbe had taken an affectionate leave of them.]

"But a circumstance presently occurred which aroused Her Majesty from this calmness and indifference. The King came in to inform her that La Fayette, during the night, had caused the guards to desert from the palace of Versailles.

"The effect on her of this intelligence was like the lightning which precedes a loud clap of thunder.

"Everything that followed was perfectly in character, and shook every nerve of the royal authority.

"'Thus,' exclaimed Marie Antoinette, 'thus, Sire, have you humiliated yourself, in condescending to go to Paris, without having accomplished the object. You have not regained the confidence of your subjects. Oh, how bitterly do I deplore the loss of that confidence! It exists no longer. Alas! when will it be restored!'

"The French guards, indeed, had been in open insurrection through the months of June and July, and all that could be done was to preserve one single company of grenadiers, by means of their commander, the Baron de Leval, faithful to their colours. This company had now been influenced by General La Fayette to desert and join their companions, who had enrolled themselves in the Paris national guard.

"Messieurs de Bouille and de Luxembourg being interrogated by the Queen respecting the spirit of the troops under their immediate command, M. de Bouille answered, Madame, I should be very sorry to be compelled to undertake any internal operation with men who have been seduced from their allegiance, and are daily paid by a faction which aims at the overthrow of its legitimate Sovereign. I would not answer for a man that has been in the neighbourhood of the seditious national troops, or that has read the inflammatory discussions of the National Assembly. If Your Majesty and the King wish well to the nation—I am sorry to say it—its happiness depends on your quitting immediately the scenes of riot and placing yourselves in a situation to treat with the National Assembly on equal terms, whereby the King may be unbiassed and unfettered by a compulsive, overbearing mob; and this can only be achieved by your flying to a place of safety. That you may find such a place, I will answer with my life!"