

V



MARYSIEŃKA

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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Marysienka

Gallery of Count Roman Potocky, Lencut, Galicia

(41)

MARYSIENKA

MARIE DE LA GRANGE D'ARQUIEN
QUEEN OF POLAND,
AND WIFE OF SOBIESKI
1641-1716

BY

K. WALISZEWSKI

Translated from the French by

LADY MARY LOYD

With a Portrait

LONDON
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1898

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To
LA COMTESSE XAVIER BRANIČKA
(née COMTESSE POTOČKA)
OF THE CASTLE OF WILLANÓW
—THE HOME OF MARYSIEŃKA AND SOBIESKI,
RESTORED BY THE CARE OF ITS PRESENT OCCUPANTS—
BY HER OWN GRACIOUS PERMISSION,
I RESPECTFULLY DEDICATE THIS BOOK

INTRODUCTION

WHO was Marysieńka?

A Frenchwoman, who became Queen of Poland, where this name was bestowed upon her.

The fact has but little interest for you, reader? 'Nor for me either!' I would reply, if this peculiarity (not an ordinary one, by any means) were the only one her story offers. But the question of the manner in which the daughter of a mere captain in Monsieur's Guard, needy and of somewhat shady reputation to boot, contrived to succeed an Austrian archduchess on one of the fairest thrones of Europe, must present some aspects worth investigation.

And there are better things yet, to be discovered in this scrap of history. Better even than the curious, complicated, and exceedingly obscure episode of the numerous French candidatures—those of Anguien, Condé, Longueville—to the Polish throne, all of which, we see, are connected with this woman's strange career, using, or being used by her—for the great Condé was mixed up in the business, and Mazarin, and De Lionne, and the *Grand Roi* himself.

Something better yet, I say! It was not the mere facts to which I have just referred, which tempted me, some time since, to discuss this free-lance of royalty in a series of papers, published in a French Review (*Le Correspondant*, 1884-1886).

Those sketches should not be too closely compared with

in Europe, under the care of the kindest and most helpful of curators. I beg M. Macon kindly to accept this expression of my gratitude.

Little did I foresee that a similar debt, contracted on the same spot, would be paid beside a newly-made grave! The emotion with which I make my acknowledgment is all the deeper, and the thought that the shadow of a noble and beloved memory hovers over these pages, the perusal of which, I would fain think, would have given *him* pleasure, is a satisfaction to me. Much that they contain relates to the history of his race.

I am encumbered, in the present instance, with debts of the same nature. The guardians of public and private stores of documents, whether French or foreign, are my never-ceasing creditors, and I run sore risk of dying before I discharge my liabilities. But I never forget what I owe to them, as also to the Baron d'Hunolstein, to my excellent comrade M. Frederic Masson, to the Rev. Père Pierling, of the Society of Jesus, and to my good friend M. Julien de St. Venant.

Baron Hunolstein actually confided to me, on one occasion, no less a treasure than the supplement to the *Mazariniana* at the Quai d'Orsay, which is preserved in the archives of the house of Montmorency-Luxembourg.

Mons. Frederic Masson is a very Cræsus of learning, who casts his stores of knowledge out of window to his friends passing in the street below. My one regret is that I have not been able to make fuller use of the share I have gathered up.

The Rev. Père Pierling probably knows more than any other Frenchman of what is being done amongst foreign archives. The notes on Italy and England, which he was good enough to communicate to me, have been of the greatest service.

Mons. de St. Venant has done me the kindness of examining the collections of muniments in the Nièvre, Marysieńka's native district.

I also owe some precious items of information to Comte Xavier Braniński, the present owner of the Castle of Willanów, Sobieski's last place of residence. But in Poland itself I found few unpublished records. A series of publications undertaken by the Academy of Science at Cracow, in connection with the second centenary of the deliverance of Vienna, has exhausted the local sources of information. Six volumes of documents represent my own share in this result. The archives of that country, besides, are some of them peculiarly difficult of access, whilst others cannot be turned to account. One of the latest explorers in that direction, Mons. Korzon, has been forced to cast a veil of anonymity over certain of his references.

I find myself in a somewhat difficult position as to Mons. Korzon, who has offered, spontaneously and most graciously, to send me the valuable pages of a very important work, entitled *The Fortunes, good and evil, of Sobieski* ('*Dola i Niedola Jana Sobieskiego, 1629-1674*'), which he is about to send forth, and the publication of which has been undertaken by the Cracow Academy—a most eclectic body, and with every claim to the quality. The second volume of this book having only just been sent to press, and the complete work not being due to appear for another year, I have been specially favoured by this early bestowal of the first, I am sincerely obliged to the author: but as, after having treated me fairly well in his work, he proceeds to handle me tolerably ill, I have some difficulty in comprehending his intention.

To borrow an expression of his own—at the sense of which, indeed, I am forced to guess—his action is, no doubt, a piece

of 'obstructive diplomacy' (p. 347). On the whole, however, I am very much obliged to him, and my only regret is that I have not been able to extract all the good I had hoped from his work, seeing the author has set himself to make a book of theories—and theory in history is the last thing I seek for.

But I am very glad to advise those of my readers whose taste in that direction is stronger than my own, to peruse the volume, which, from this particular point of view, is replete with interest.

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CHAPTER I

THE START

- I. Departure—The Royal Cortège—The new Queen of Poland—A Fore-runner—The De Gonzagues—From the Donjon of Vincennes to the Castle of Warsaw—Cinq-Mars—Unpublished lines by Gaston d'Orléans—Marriage.
- II. Feminine surroundings—'Pretty faces'—Every one expects to find a husband—Marysieńska's first appearance—The D'Arquien family—The Château des Bordes.
- III. Through the Low Countries and Germany—Dantzic—A Surprise—Not a step further!
- IV. A terrible mischance—The vengeance of the Chevalier de Bois-Dauphin—Marysieńska's fortunes imperilled—History and Legend—The key to the mystery—Mme. de Guébriant's tribulations—Victory—The curtains drawn at last—The King's attack of gout—Marysieńska retires into the shade.

I

THE road between Paris and St. Denis on a November morning in 1645. Such a crowd! Such a clatter! In the centre of the roadway, a strange and glittering procession. The Child-King, the Queen Regent, the whole Court, the Regiment of the Gardes-du-Corps, the Swiss Guard, the Musketeers, the Light Horse, the Gendarmes, every branch of the Royal Guard, representatives of the various professions, cloth merchants, mercers, druggists: all the city authorities, headed by the Duc de Montbazon, Governor of Paris and of the Ile-de-France. But every eye turns with special interest towards a strange, foreign-looking troop of horsemen, bestriding steeds with tails and manes dyed crimson, and gilded housings starred with jewels, with brilliant-hued loose-floating garments, shaven heads, and

A

long moustaches. And there is no lack of onlookers to see the show—spectators standing twelve deep, a double row of coaches, and eager faces crowding every house, even to the roof-tops. The cannon roars, and the crowd shouts ‘Long live the new Queen! A prosperous journey!’

What lady is this, who takes her way amidst the friendly acclamations of the Paris of her day? That high and puissant princess, Marie de Gonzague, Duchess of Nevers, Princess of Mantua, married, last night, to King Ladislas IV. of Poland.

Another Frenchwoman, destined, as I shall show, to lead her whose story I propose to tell, along the road to Warsaw, and up to the highest place there. So closely mingled were their fates, that I must e’en bring my heroine’s forerunner upon the scene.

You know her already, surely, more or less, and you cannot fail to know somewhat of her royal spouse. He—the last but one of those Vasas of Poland and of Sweden, who strove to wear a double crown, and failed in the attempt; a soldier king, overtaken all too soon—before his eight-and-fortieth year—by increasing corpulence and attacks of gout, but full of courage still, and an eager enough lover on occasion—showing a bold front to his physical infirmities, and ever meditating fresh warlike undertakings. She—past her four-and-thirtieth year, and in certain of those bygone years she had lived her life twice over.

A terrible, storm-tossed set, these De Gonzagues, with their mixed blood, drawn from every race in Europe—here German, there Italian, and Spanish too, and Greek! Charles, father of our Princess, had Henrietta of Cleves for his mother; his grandmother was a Paleologus, and his uncle, the Boar of the Ardennes! He might have ascended the Byzantine throne (so the Duc d’Aumale tells us) but that he dallied in France, warring against Richelieu. ‘His skin’ (writes one biographer, in all seriousness),¹ ‘on the slightest

¹ Quoted by Louis Paris, *Hist. de l’Abbaye d’Avenay*, vol. i. p. 409.

friction, gave out a fiery atmosphere, or blast.' An adventurous, passionate race—pugnacious, like the German, romantic and subtle, like the Italian, plotting, like the Greek, meddlesome, like seventeenth century Frenchmen, before the days of Louis XIV. The family remained Italian, within the limits of its Marquisate of Mantua, till towards the second half of the sixteenth century. Then it sent out a swarm. Luigi di Gonzaga crossed the Alps to marry Henriette de Nevers, and straightway the hardy race set itself to enlarge its borders in the new country. It soon held three Duchies—Cleves, Nevers, and Rethel—and when the Fronde came, France seemed, for a moment, to lie in the hollow of the De Gonzagues' hand.

Up to the time of which we write, the new Queen has not belied her origin. 'Never,' says Tallemant, 'did any one have such ups and downs.' At eighteen she had driven poor Gaston d'Orléans mad for love of her (not his worst madness, this, by any means), and he would fain have carried her off. She, without a doubt, would have let him have his way, had not Richelieu locked her, for a space, within the Castle of Vincennes, where she may, perchance, have received the following lines, which I found among her papers in the Chantilly Archives:

' Je jure vos beaux yeux de vous garder ma foi,
Beaux yeux, mes clairs soleils, qui pour l'amour de moi,
Furent longtemps couverts d'un si triste nuage.
Si toujours votre amour est mon souverain bien,
Le ciel qui me promet plus d'un sceptre en partage
Révoque sa promesse, et ne me donne rien !'

The lines bear no signature, but their tenor betrays their origin.

Then, in 1642, came the tragic business about Cinq-Mars. Love-affairs and political intrigues, all unavowable; letters recovered with the greatest difficulty, at the very foot of the scaffold; and Tallemant's apology, 'Mons. le Grand did

visit her by night, several times over, but nobody ever said anything unpleasant about it.'

And is this all? No, indeed! Two years go by, the Duc d'Anguien (the 'great Condé' of a later day) appears upon the scene, and the lady's reputation is compromised even in Tallemant's eyes. But this time she snaps her fingers at them all. From a downtrodden orphan, she has grown, by her own efforts, a power to be reckoned with. At her father's death, in 1637, she has appropriated the lion's share of the inheritance—the Duchy of Nevers—and has given her sisters leave to choose between the cloister and black poverty. The younger, Benedicte, has already taken the veil, and will die a nun. The elder, Anne, has held her own, and married an Archbishop—'that crack-brained Guise,' as an illustrious historian of his own blood has described him. She will become the 'Princess Palatine' of Bossuet's *Oraison funèbre*. Meanwhile the Princess Marie, established in the splendid Hôtel de Nevers (between the Tour de Nesle and the Pont Neuf, about where the Mint now stands), has set to work to hatch the Fronde and wheedle the Cardinal, both at once. She has held her court over against the real one, less gay than hers, just at this period. Madame de Rambouillet's salon is on the wane; Madame de Longueville, still mourning her handsome Coligny, killed in a duel with De Guise, keeps herself apart, pending her coming triumphs at Münster. This inheritance, too, falls to the Princess Marie. Clever men meet in her rooms, and the '*importants*' hold their sittings there. A sore worry this, to Mazarin.

Then, of a sudden, comes a stroke of fortune. The King of Poland has lost his German wife, Cecilia of Austria. Undaunted by the Swedish Queen Christina's eighteen summers, he has bethought him of taking her to fill the vacant place, and has applied to the Cardinal to push his suit.

The request was founded on serious political considerations. Wedded to Christina, and safe from Swedish menace, the King was prepared to make war against the

Turk, who was once more threatening the existence of his sovereignty. This was well enough. But the Cardinal shook his head. 'Why should his Polish Majesty look for a wife so far afield? Princesses were plentiful enough in France, thank God!'

'Mademoiselle?' ventured the King's envoy, Roncalli, another Italian, timidly. 'You cannot mean it!'

And the conversation turned to Mlle. de Guise and Mlle. de Longueville. Mazarin's plan was laid. The Hôtel de Nevers closed, and himself rid of the Princess Marie—what a chance! He took good care not to lay stress on the lady of his choice, a trifle past her youth and freshness, in every sense; allowed Mademoiselle's name to be put forward; agreed to send the portraits of the Guise and Longueville princesses to the King, but chose the Marquis de Brégy to be their bearer. The Marquise, the famous niece of the witty Saumaise, 'precise, and ugly before her time, but clean and well-dressed,' was one of the most constant frequenters of the Hôtel de Nevers. The Marquis was a man of resource. He made it his business, on reaching Warsaw, to come to an understanding with the King's astrologers. Now, it was a well-known fact that the stars had promised the Princess Marie a crown. They kept better faith with her than with Gaston d'Orléans.

'Long live the new Queen! A prosperous journey!'

II

Quite a little court of Frenchwomen waited on her, headed by the Maréchale de Guébriant, wife of the conqueror of Alsace, and the Bishop of Orange, as Ambassador and Ambassadress extraordinary. After them, a whole swarm of young women, ladies-in-waiting and maids-of-honour. There was a Des Essarts, a De Langeron, a D'Aubigny, a De Mailly-Lascaris, Geneviève, daughter of the Duchesse de Croy and the Comte de Mailly, her *mari de conscience*, jokingly called 'the little Duchesse de Croy.' She was fourteen, or

perhaps fifteen, pretty enough, and penniless. The Duchesse de Schomberg, *née* d'Hautefort (the 'Mother of the poor,' she was called), had given her clothes and outfit for the journey. She would, it was hoped, find a husband in Poland. There was a comforting hint as to this point in the Marquis de Brégy's letters. 'Pretty faces, and no anxiety as to dowry.' And if it came to that, the new Queen would see to such things, for once she reached Poland, she would have gold in plenty. The late Queen had sent four millions of money back to her own country in the space of a few years! No royal position, except that in France, was so well endowed. Wherefore the procession swelled, Mesdames Des Essarts, De Langeron, and others, bringing their daughters with them, and the Queen appearing very willing. De Brégy had further affirmed that it was her interest to appear surrounded by as many 'pretty faces' as possible, to checkmate the Austrian cabal, still existing at Warsaw, which chiefly depended on female influence. So the *berlines*, with their burden of youth and dimples, and rustling silks and merry laughter, stretched along the highroad to the distant capital. It looked rather as if the Queen were travelling at the head of a young ladies' school.

Even a sweet childish face, hardly more than four years old, might have been espied in one of the passing vehicles. Marriage could scarcely have been thought of yet for so youthful a maiden. And she had neither father nor mother, in the procession. Why was she being taken? And who was taking her? My readers will guess at all the ill-natured conjectures and gossiping reports. I came across their echo, and their contradiction too, quite recently, even under the hand of the illustrious historian of the House of Condé.

The contradiction is simple enough. Granting such a tangible memory of the Princess Marie's past to have existed, she is not likely to have dreamt of displaying it in her wedding procession. What then? A mystery. The moment we draw close to any historic figure, we must sub-

mit to finding a goodly number of our questions left unanswered.

The future will teach us more anent the baby traveller for the child is She—the daughter of obscure French gentleman, destined by fate to reach prodigious fortunes—the heroine of this book—*Marysieńka*!

Her parents had remained behind in Paris. Her father, Henri de la Grange d'Arquien, serving as captain in Monsieur's Guard; her mother, Françoise de la Châtre, burdened with a numerous progeny. The D'Arquiens sprang from a prolific race of country gentlemen, dwelling in the ancient Château des Bordes, still one of the gems of the Nivernais, the recently explored muniments of which have brought a host of curious documents to light. One gifted Abbé, in particular, has left us the quaintest picture of the full-fed existence and easy-going habits of his day.¹

A time was coming when 'the King's Chamber' would be proudly displayed by the dwellers in the ancient manor-house. The Polish eagle, under a royal crown, was to spread its wings above the huge stone chimney-piece. It may be seen there yet, a trifle marred by the turmoil of the Revolution. The doors still bear views of Warsaw and the Vistula. The King himself, the great Sobieski, never came to take possession of the splendid 'oaken four-post bed, with pillars at the head, and double canopy,' which was still to be seen and admired at the close of the last century. But his wife, the D'Arquien Queen, was to rest upon it.

Neither she nor her parents, we may be sure, foresaw this, at the time of which we speak. They had no share even in the existing and very moderate wealth belonging to the Château, which had passed, by division of inheritance, to a distant branch of the family.

They vegetated at Paris, and felt their daughters sorely on their hands. The convent yawned for the eldest: Marie de Gonzague, when she took the second with her, probably

¹ *Letters of the Abbé de Chaulieu*, published in 1850, by the Marquis de Béranger, p. 140.

performed a mere act of charity. The mother had been her *gouvernante*; the child promised to be very pretty; in due time some Sarmatian husband would be found for her. Her tiny figure took up but little space in the great travelling company.

Before the journey was ended, ill-natured tongues were once again to assail the new sovereign's reputation, and in still more serious fashion than before.

III

There was no unseemly haste about the royal journey. The severity of the winter weather, indeed, and the harshness of Mme. Galman, the child's governess, may well have inspired M. d'Arquien's little daughter with the conviction that whatever other benefit might accrue, there was no saving in the matter of time, connected with travel in a monarch's train. This feeling was shared by the Polish lords who had crowded to Dantzig, and were kept there, kicking their heels and spending a mint of money. But Marie de Gonzague seemed in no hurry whatever. She had, we may conclude, collected certain facts beyond those already known to us, concerning the delights awaiting her in her new capital. She would have riches and to spare, no doubt. But the King did not rise, as a rule, till after dinner. He took his meals in bed, and this accounted for his premature corpulence. These habits did not betoken any likelihood of very cheerful daylight hours. And the Queen dawdled through the Flemish and German towns, leisurely tasting the first-fruits of a sovereignty which, however thoroughly agreeable in all its present conditions, promised some ultimate drawbacks. Long hours were spent, too, in prosecuting her active correspondence with her friends in Paris, who must necessarily be kept informed as to the details of her reception in foreign countries: with the Queen, whom she delighted to call 'my sister,' and with the Cardinal—for she was more than anxious to convince him that his efforts on her behalf had been no

foolish blunder. And she took pains to write to her husband in Italian—since the days of Queen Bona Sforza, the mother of the last of the Jagellons, that language had been currently spoken at the Polish Court—sending him two letters in close succession, ‘tolerably long, and without any mistakes, except a single one in the spelling.’ She applied herself to being on good terms with the Polish gentlemen in her suite, and to further this object, endeavoured to learn their exceedingly crabbed tongue. To conclude, and this above all, she set herself, without loss of time, to gain a footing in that world of high politics which had always held an irresistible charm for her. She installed herself firmly in the place of honour she had won, at last, after too long dallying in outer courts, and there she sat in state, taking her ease, in exquisite enjoyment.

All this consumed much time. Two whole days were spent at Cambrai, where the Queen must talk with the Governor concerning the peaceful intentions of France, and make herself acquainted with the tendency of the popular mind, which was supposed to be exceedingly hostile to Spanish rule.

Then four days at Brussels. For Mme. de Chevreuse chanced to be there, and such an opportunity of proving her own zeal, and paying off a few personal scores, was too good to be neglected. Had not that arch-intriguer taken upon herself to make the Spanish Ministers, and everybody else, believe she could go back to Paris whenever she chose! And, besides, she had spoken slightly of charms which had captivated a great king. ‘Never let the Queen say I am too fat again’;—this in a letter to the great Condé’s mother—‘if I had had an ounce of flesh the less, I should never have been able to remove the idea put about by Mme. de Chevreuse, that I was dried up skin-and-bone.’ On which remark follows this piece of bitter philosophy, which I am half inclined to dedicate to our modern students of the sex. ‘The hatred all women bear one another is a horrible thing. They tear each other to pieces!’

The august traveller carried away few pleasant memories of Brussels and the Low Countries. A Princess of Phalsbourg—she writes it *Falsebure*—Henriette d'Orléans, actually ventured to sign her letter, 'your very devoted servant and cousin,' and laid claim to a *tabouret*, into the bargain! That lady was soon taught who the Queen of Poland was, and how she expected to be treated! But blessings on Germany and the obsequious German burgomasters, who fired off cannon when the Queen entered and departed from their towns, and bowed themselves down to the ground before her! She blundered, sometimes, in her replies to their harangues, and in her manner of speaking to the native charioteers who drove her carriages. She would call some astounded magistrate a *Fuhrman* and address some equally puzzled coachman as *Bürgermeister*. But she always made the most graceful apologies, and every one thought her delightful.

And delightful, indeed, she was, with her French-Italian eagerness, and her courage and impetuosity, and perfect confidence. Travelling in the heart of a merciless winter, through the dreariest districts in Europe, to join a sickly husband in a half-barbarous country, and share his fragile crown, she beamed with exultation. She was 'wonderfully fortunate. A steady frost kept the roads in excellent order, and there was only a week of unpleasant cold.' One day she was 'able to remain unmasked from morning till night,' driving nine leagues 'through a fir-wood, which is one of the most enjoyable things in the world.'

The Maréchal de Guébriant would certainly have lost his sight, which was so weak already, if he had seen nothing but snow for a month. But she had no anxiety about hers. Nothing daunted the brave-hearted creature, not even when the cannon-shots, instead of being salvos to welcome her arrival, were fired into an unlucky town by its besiegers. She only laughed, vowed the new habit would be useful, and entertained herself by watching the gunners ply their matches.

But three months had gone by before she reached Dantzic.

And there a mishap befell her—one which was to begin by puzzling contemporary gazetteers, and end by stirring the spite of future historians. The anecdote is piquant enough, especially as retailed by M. Vandal. Readers of the *Revue des Deux Mondes* will doubtless recall it.¹

I am half sorry to contradict it. Marie de Gonzague's reputation, already considerably tried, might have endured the strain. But the improbability, in this case, is really too glaring, and the possibility of certifying facts by documentary evidence is such a rare one, that I should do ill to overlook this opportunity.

IV

King Ladislas had, up to this particular moment, shown himself every whit as eager as the gentlemen he had deputed to greet the new Queen. He had even, on several occasions, shown symptoms of irritation, due to the deliberation of her movements. Yet behold! on her arrival in the great seaport, Marie de Gonzague was met by a request that her stay there might be prolonged. What did it mean? What had happened?

My readers are cognisant of the terrible mischance, the dark intrigue, which has been supposed to have gone near to compromising, at one fell swoop, the fortunes of the charming Princess, and of the baby Marysieńka. Marie de Gonzague had left enemies, as well as friends, behind her, in Paris. A certain Chevalier de Bois-Dauphin, of the noble house of Laval, son of the Marquise de Sablé, and married, for a year past, to the Marquise de Coaslin, had a recent grudge against her. He had been an unsuccessful suitor of Mme. de Choisy, the mother of another witty Abbé; he had written down his failure to the new Queen's influence, and nursed a fearful vengeance. While Ladislas' over-confident spouse was basking in the homage of the German burgo-

¹ 1st February 1883. *Marie de Gonzague à Varsovie.*

masters, a courier, starting from Paris, outstripped her on the road to Warsaw, and bore the King a letter, in which the sovereign was to find matter for the condemnation of the woman he had summoned to share his bed and throne—the revelation, amply proved, of her past misconduct.

What better proof, indeed, was needed, than the presence of the four-year-old child she was dragging across Germany with her? The unlucky sovereign's indignation and perplexity may be conceived and understood, and the Dantzic incident swiftly explained. Another courier is forthwith despatched, to meet the unworthy bride half way, and forbid her access to a kingdom which she must no longer call her own.

I am always filled with an admiration, devoid of the slightest touch of surprise or irritation, when I consider the ingenious workings of the popular imagination, which cheerfully drapes naked historical facts, without the smallest regard to their true shape, darning the texture, should it appear too poor, after its own sweet will, and embroidering all with dainty arabesques. And I am grieved to the heart, sometimes, at being forced to destroy its work. Two clear facts rise out of this dark *imbroglio*: the despatch of a courier from Paris to Warsaw, in December—that is, immediately after Marie de Gonzague left that city—and a certain disturbance in the Polish capital, arising out of the news the courier bore. In fact, Count Denhof, the King's favourite minister and habitual confidant, did at once request M. de Brégy to 'speak with him face to face, so that he might give him notice of a serious change, which the receipt of certain news from Paris might make in the King's views.' Had this news any bearing on Princess Marie's past love-affairs? Not the very slightest. The Princess's dowry—small account was made of the sentimental aspect of the case!—had been fixed at 700,000 crowns, payable in different instalments, 600,000 livres of which were given by the Queen, and to be paid on the nail. But ere he made this first payment, Mazarin had calculated, pencil in hand. Before sending

the Princess into Poland, it had been necessary to provide her with a proper outfit, 'coaches, dresses, beds, furniture, and a thousand similar things, for'—in spite of the air of external splendour which hung about the Hôtel de Nevers—'frankly speaking, she possessed nothing at all of the kind.' M. de Brégy pressed the necessity for sparing no expense, declaring it desirable that the Princess should 'prove her magnificence, as compared with the shabbiness of the late Queen, the Austrian, who had not even a shift to her back.' So the bill was written down, 50,000 livres, 'it being the universal custom that the husband should bear such expenses.' And then came another claim. The practice followed in every country made it reasonable to hope that the King of Poland 'would not do anything to disappoint the idea of his splendour prevalent in Paris,' by any lack of magnificence in his gifts to his betrothed, and the persons connected with her.

Now Count Denhof had, it is true, brought some few trifles with him, and the Cardinal, on whom he had bestowed a chased silver basin, adorned with the figure of a mounted gendarme, had 'greatly valued this proof of liberality.'

But the public had betrayed a certain amount of disappointment, which it was thought well to remedy. For this purpose, hasty orders were given for the preparation of a diamond cross, worth 200,000 livres, which the Polish envoys were to present to the new Queen, as if it had been sent her by the King. This cross had necessarily been paid for with ready money. Wherefore, after a moment's hesitation, the Cardinal's pencil boldly wrote the sum of 100,000 crowns, to be reckoned, of course, against the dowry, and consequently deducted from the first instalment due. And the said instalment, even in its reduced form, ran no small risk of being utterly lost, or at all events, delayed. For the Princess's nephew, the needy head of her house, who had been waging war beyond the Alps, and fighting the Spaniard and the Savoyard, to keep his hold on Mantua, had suddenly appeared in Paris with an army of bailiffs and sheriff's

officers, and laid an embargo on everything his aunt possessed.

Such, according to authentic documents,¹ was the news which threatened, in December 1645, to 'change his Polish Majesty's temper,' and cast a shadow across the brightness of his honeymoon. Everything else is pure fiction and excess of fancy, in a sphere vowed to the severest sobriety.

Ladislav IV., a man of the clearest and most well-balanced mind, and provided, moreover, with one of the best-served and most active diplomatic organisations in Europe, did not wait till he was formally married, before finding out all that was to be known as to his wife's former life, and passing the sponge, with a firm hand, across any reprehensible items that appeared.

He had other means of information at command than that supplied by the Chevalier de Bois-Dauphin. Anne of Austria herself had undertaken (before the signing of the contract) to make herself responsible for the Princess, and had *then* declared that 'she would have a right to complain of the King of Poland, if he could imagine that she desired to give him a wife with whom any fault could be found. *She was giving the Princess in marriage as though she were her own daughter.*'

Such an assurance once solicited and received, the matter was inevitably and unalterably closed, and it would have been unpardonable on Ladislav's part if he had dreamt of re-opening the question. He never had the slightest desire to do so.

But what, then, was the meaning of the request forwarded to Dantzic—in the most courteous terms, it must be acknowledged? The courier who brought it was also the bearer of a letter to the Queen of France, full of compliments

¹ Part of these documents, consisting of the letters of Marie de Gonzague and the Marquis de Brégy to Mazarin, are in the Paris Foreign Office, and part in the Montmorency-Luxembourg Archives. Few of Mazarin's letters have found a place either in the Quai d'Orsay collection, or in Mons. Chéruel's published work.

concerning the partner the King was preparing to receive at her fair hands.

Here is the key to the mystery.

Just at that time, on February 12, 1645, Ladislas was still intending to travel in person to meet his wife at Dantzic. The plan was abandoned. Marie de Gonzague, starting again on February 20th, reached the Castle of Falenty, some two leagues from the capital, on March the 7th, and there had to submit to another spell of quarantine. It was not till a week later that the first meeting took place, in the Cathedral of St. Jean—a most disconcerting interview, which filled all present with astonishment. The King, dreary-faced and dull-eyed, seemed nailed to his chair. No word of welcome to the newcomer passed his lips, and when she bent low before him, he made not the slightest sign of effort to raise her. He did indeed sup with her that evening, together with his brother, Prince John-Casimir, and the Maréchale de Guébriant, but immediately after the meal, he retired to his own apartments. The next day, and for days afterwards—in spite of all Mme. de Guébriant's efforts to break the ice, and all the ingenuity she spent in her endeavours to bring about what she looked on as the indispensable consummation of her mission—the King was just as cold. She had to wait till the 8th of April before sending off her triumphant message. That day, at last, she conducted the King into the Queen's chamber, and, with her own hands, drew the curtains of the nuptial couch.

What had occurred during that interval? I am quite prepared to excuse the more or less spiteful vagaries of contemporary chroniclers and posthumous legend. But I am bound, all the same, to establish truth according to facts. Nothing had taken place to smirch the new Queen's honour, nor even to disturb the excellent understanding between the newly married pair, which was evident to all from the very morrow of the great event.

Here is the simple truth—the King had been suffering from the gout.

As for little Marie-Casimire d'Arquien, she was utterly unaware, probably, of the incidents which had delayed the arrival of the rest she must have sorely needed. She was never, at all events, brought under discussion in connection with them. Nobody, except Mme. Galman, had given her tiny person a thought, and she was soon to be lost in the recesses of the huge Palace of Warsaw, there to grow up in the shadow, learning the national language, imbibing the native habits, and receiving from the Poles among whom she dwelt that *sobriquet*, an affectionate diminutive of her own name, which was one day to be famous in history, and which, in its dainty familiarity, defines her personally and historically, and yet recalls her condition as a humble *protégée*.

Eleven years were to elapse before she emerged, to play a leading part, thenceforward, both on the Polish and on the European stage.

CHAPTER II

A FRENCH COURT AT WARSAW

- I. Marysieńska's education—Conjectures—The Court of Warsaw—Marie de Gonzague's arrival works a revolution—France *versus* Austria—France triumphs—The Marquis de Brégy sets the fashion—Frivolity and depravity—The 'little Duchess' defends herself—A bad beginning.
- II. Death of King Ladislas—The Queen falls ill—She is re-elected and re-married without her own knowledge—The new King—John-Casimir's past history.
- III. Days of trial—The Swedish invasion—Marie de Gonzague transfigured—The great Queen, who saves Poland—Marysieńska re-appears.

I

SCARCELY anything is known, for those eleven years, of the life, the education, the friendships, the moral and intellectual development, nor the first social appearances, of Mme. Galman's charge. The only way in which we can conjure up any idea of them, is by endeavouring to reconstitute the surroundings in which this obscure chapter of her history was unfolded.

They were anything but austere surroundings. The temperament and conduct of Ladislas recall certain memories of a neighbouring *roi galant*. He had a *maîtresse en titre*, Fraülein von Eckenberg—one of the late Queen's maids-of-honour, who held the post of governess to the little Prince Royal, a six-year-old boy—and fleeting fancies beyond number. On such and such a day (I quote one of M. de Brégy's reports), His Majesty goes 'to the baths, in certain ladies' houses,' and comes back ill. The new Queen's arrival does indeed make some change in the

B

Palace and its frivolous inhabitants, but the flesh and the devil do not lose by it. Individuals and manners alter, nothing else.

The Polish Court, fated by original inferiority, and a corresponding impressionability, to periodic invasions of foreign influence, was inured to revolutions of this description. Its face, turned for centuries past, like some sun-loving plant, towards the Western sources of light and higher civilisation, had, now and then, flashed back an answering ray. Italian to the core, under the later Jagellons (thanks to the Sforza Queen), French, for a passing space, under Henri de Valois, it had turned German, some time before the date at which we find ourselves. But the French Invasion was upon it once again. There was a great disturbance—a furious assault, and desperate defence. Fraülein von Eckenberg clung to her fortress, which she had no mind to surrender. The Countess Magni—wife of a former minister of the Emperor's, who had entered the Polish service—had contrived to intrench herself in a formidable position within the besiegers' very camp. She was Mistress of the Robes to the new Queen, and strove to win her favour by 'attentions of every kind'; Marie de Gonzague vowed she would hate her, all the same, but did not feel quite sure she should succeed. At one moment the newcomers' fate hung in the balance, and there was talk of the dismissal of all the Queen's servants. But it was a false alarm. The French colours were to triumph in the end, and M. de Brégy was to set the fashion at Warsaw, even as in later days he set it at Stockholm, where he drove the Swedish senators to tremble for their sovereign's reputation. Certain documents collected by M. Frederic Masson contain some curious revelations on this subject.

For the moment, the enterprising young ambassador (he had barely reached his thirtieth year) was content with Mme. des Essarts, the daughter of an artisan, who had made an aristocratic marriage. Her triumph roused the jealousy of Mme. d'Aubigny, a fierce Italian, wedded to a crafty

Norman. Then came a woman's battle, full of sly intrigue and vile accusations. The King, led away by bad example, cast longing eyes first on Mlle. de Guébriant, the Maréchale's niece, whose resistance was of the feeblest, and then on the little 'Duchesse de Croy,' who soon taught His Majesty what it was to deal with a Parisian gifted with a pretty wit of her own, and knowing how to use it. The conviction that she had been sent to Poland to find herself a husband was firmly rooted in her pretty little head, and she had no notion of spoiling her own chances.

'I believe your Majesty does me the honour of speaking to me in Polish. I do not, as yet, understand that language.'

'How's that? You seemed to understand what M. Krasinski was saying to you perfectly well, a moment since!'

'M. Krasinski is not a king. To understand a king's language, one should be a queen. With your Majesty's permission, I will ask the Queen to explain your words to me!'

Gallantry had grown subtler, debauchery had put on a more graceful air, but the fevered love of pleasure and voluptuous enjoyment raged all the more fiercely. It was the universal occupation. In the daytime, billets-doux flew to and fro. At night, tender sighs and glances sped hither and thither. And there were dances too, and *tête-à-tête* suppers! Though the Queen—grown a thought heavy, already, and tired of such things, busied, too, with other cares—did not, perhaps, head the merry whirl, it seems, none the less, to have been closely connected with her person. Pleasure and love-making had once filled so large a space in her existence! She can scarcely, according to her portraits, have been pretty or seductive, even in her first youth. Her features, though regular, were hard, her mouth imperious, her whole expression strong and brave, without a touch of softness. Yet she did fascinate every one who came near her. A sort of magnetism,—the fire-blast, of which the chronicler spoke—surrounded her with an atmo-

sphere of passion and seduction. Loyal-hearted men, tried soldiers, forgot everything, even honour, for her sake. As, for instance, the Marquis de Gesvres, who left the camp to join her, and missed his chance of fighting at Rocroy. A cold-natured woman, take her all in all—dull, as far as her senses were concerned, though her imagination was hot enough. One master passion, only, does she discover—ambition. Of religion, scarce a touch, in spite of her tardy submission (1643) to the severe rule of the Abbé de St. Cyran, and the Port Royal solitaires. This newly acquired Jansenism was not to cling to her long in Poland, where the Jesuits ruled. Her restless soul, incredulous and bold, was soon to turn back to its old love of free-thought and curious inquiry, to consulting the stars, and adding to the heaps of documents relating to the 'great work,' now enshrined in the Chantilly Archives.

During those early Polish days, neither her ambition, her love of politics, nor her remarkable talent in such matters were turned to the best advantage. Not that she felt herself lost, or out of place, in her new surroundings; she was as much at ease, from the first, as if she had been born at Warsaw, and was heard, on the very morrow of her arrival, vowing the country was 'admirable,' and she herself 'born to reign over it.' But her early policy was tainted, for some time, by her own past, by the narrow limits, and vitiated atmosphere, to which fate had hitherto condemned her;—atmosphere of the closest, outlook utterly confined. She did not support her husband—she did not even contrive to understand him.

Neither those visits to 'the baths' nor the charms of an Armenian lady, who consoled him for the rebuffs inflicted by 'the little Duchess,' nor the graces of a fascinating actress in a man's part, 'who played the lute and sang enchantingly,' thereby kindling a flame in the heart of his legitimate spouse, could turn the king's mind from the object he had in view when he sought a wife—in Stockholm, first, and afterwards in Paris. In all seriousness and determination,

he was making himself ready for battle. Night and day, his thoughts were fixed on war; he was resolved on it, at any price. Wherefore? Because it was the only card he had in his hand. He might, perhaps, have settled matters with the Turk beyond his borders,—but a double peril, and a closer one, threatened him from within. In his own Capital, Diets grew more and more stormy, the nobles more and more turbulent, government, in a word, less and less possible.

On the confines of his realm, the Turk and the Muscovite were egging on the undisciplined Cossacks of the Ukraine, and popular revolt was close at his doors. Anarchy here, *Jacquerie* there. Only one hope remained, War—occupation for these forces of destruction, the strengthening of the Royal authority by the harsh discipline of camp and field.

In France the position was so thoroughly appreciated that every readiness was shown to support the King's designs. The Marquis de Brégy was sent distinct orders to this effect. Then, suddenly, the Cardinal learnt, with rage and stupor, that the new Queen—his own creature—was working in a contrary direction. The Diet assembled, the Queen's partisans conspired to checkmate the King, and did it!

The Cardinal complained bitterly. 'When I think that on her wedding day, after having dined with the King, she did me the honour of coming to me, and telling me, before the whole company, that she came to show me the crown I had helped to put upon her head!'

M. de Brégy lost his temper, and even went so far as to talk about ingratitude, and 'culpable independence.'

But the reply came swiftly. 'If you say that as Ambassador, I answer you, as Queen of Poland, that I have never known her to feel bound to depend on any other crown whatever!' And finally, the King's plans and preparations, his wagons that were to turn at will into boats, and other warlike contrivances, all stood idle.

Why, again? Because the war, with its hungry jaws, was nibbling at the Queen's dowry—the King, her husband,

insisting on a forced loan from his better half; and because if the King's warlike projects were carried out, the Queen's belongings were threatened with danger. Compared with this, Turks and Cossacks, the integrity of the realm, and the future of the dynasty, were nothing but idle tales, and the *Ordinary* of 10th December 1646, bore the following triumphant report to Mazarin.

'The Diet is over. . . . The King's warlike plans had caused much disturbance in this Republic. If he had not given up various things, my business would never have been finished. I merely spoke to the chief of the cabals, in the morning, and within two hours, I had all the votes, without a word of dissent. That which has been assigned to me is reckoned at over 400,000 *livres* a year . . . without counting the perquisites on promotions. . . . Nobody can imagine how fine the perquisites in this kingdom are!'

Marie de Gonzague, in her *first manner*, and the school, political and moral, in which her *protégée*, our Marysienka, was to learn her earliest lessons, breathe in every line of this quotation.

The child learned nobler things, later, from the same source. But the first impression remained, indelible.

II

Before adorning the history of her adopted country with certain pages, rich in glorious memories, Marie de Gonzague was herself to take lessons in that bitter school which—while it may perhaps deprave and lower certain natures—raises and ennobles, and sometimes actually transfigures, such strong and highly gifted souls as hers.

She had, as yet, only endured the most insignificant of those trials which Heaven appoints to the elect few—petty financial worries, and trivial wounds to personal vanity. She was soon to learn, by harsh and cruel experience, what it may mean to face misfortune on those steep peaks whereon,

the noblest destinies are doomed, now and again, to totter, over the brink of some unfathomable abyss.

Less than two years after her arrival in Warsaw, on August 9th, 1647, the bells of the old Cathedral, which had pealed so merrily to give her welcome, were tolling a dreary knell. A little child had died—the last frail blossom on a stem that would never bloom again.

Ladislas was childless, and heirless. There was no hope, alas! that the Queen would become a mother, no safety even for the immediate future—for the King, sorely shaken already by the disappointment of his high ambitions, was not to survive this final blow. He failed utterly, the end drew near, and on May 20th of the following year, the bells tolled again—Marie de Gonzague was a widow.

Who was to ascend the throne? No one could tell. In that country of elective royalty, popular suffrage must decide the question. There were two candidates, both of them brothers of the late King; one a bishop, the other a Jesuit. The bishop—the irony of these electoral intrigues!—was backed by the military party. The Jesuit had Rome behind him. Either candidate might have had the Queen Dowager's support, if she could have made her own bargain, plunged into the fray, used her own resources, like a worthy pupil of Richelieu and Mazarin. But she was helpless! On the very morrow of the catastrophe, she had taken to her bed, beaten down by the first blast of adversity. Ere long, she was hovering on the brink of death, forsaken by her doctors, speechless, unconscious.

Some may have thought her destiny had reached its close. It was just opening! The great Queen foreseen by the astrologers was only now to appear. When she returned to consciousness, and to the desire to live, Poland had a new King, and she a second husband. Rome and the Jesuit had won the day. But amongst other conditions imposed on the King-elect, was that of marrying his brother's widow. There would be one Queen the less to support, and a fresh election to be hoped for speedily! For the new couple

would be childless. That fact was confidently reckoned on!

The Queen thus chosen for economy, and out of regard for her well-nigh forty summers, was well content with the expedient.

The King-elect, John Casimir, was himself close on the same age. A man of strange fantastic nature, prone to extremes, unbalanced, long since, and dislocated, as it were, between his ascetic leanings, and his restless dreams of ambition. Some brilliant qualities he had—valour, a quick understanding, a certain nobleness of soul—but he was indolent, apt to lose courage, and despair. Violent too, and passionate, sometimes overbearing, sometimes humble beyond all reason—a case of *neurotic degeneration*, we should call him, now-a-days. A devoted admirer of the fair sex, and constant frequenter of their society, into the bargain. Yet no southern blood ran in his veins. On both sides—by his mother, Constance of Austria, sister of Ferdinand II., and by his father, Sigismund III. of Sweden—he was of northern descent.

He began his soldiering career, at the age of twenty, before the walls of Smolensk, earned some distinction, but soon fell sick, overwhelmed by the hardships of a winter campaign. His health recovered, he set his heart on marrying, much against the will of the Order of St. Ignatius, which had brought him up. He cast his eyes on a Princess Radziwill, who would have none of him, and sorely mortified, he departed and took service with the Emperor, to fight against France. He won no laurels in this war, came back to Poland, tried to marry one of his sister-in-law's ladies, then passed out of sight again, and reappeared in France, only to be arrested on suspicion of being a Spanish spy. Having thus run the chance of meeting his future wife at Vincennes, where he was shut up for nearly two years, he made another and very brief stay in Poland, followed by a fresh and yet longer plunge into obscurity, whence he finally emerged, to take the religious vows at Loretto.

A Jesuit at last! He edified all Europe by his piety and indifference to human grandeur, and set the brethren of his Order an example of the humility he preached, until one day his brother, who had found it by no means easy to get him out of prison, learnt, by a courier sent to Warsaw, that he desired to exchange his black habit for a scarlet robe.

He was made a Cardinal. But this did not prevent his coming to Poland, dressed like a cavalier, with sword on thigh, and swearing he would never again set foot in Rome, where his title of 'Royal Highness' had been refused him. He had discovered, besides, that the correct demeanour necessitated by his new honour, was mighty inconvenient, and also,—in spite of his hot pursuit of one of the 'pretty faces' just arrived from France with Marie de Gonzague—that he was desperately in love with Mademoiselle, of whom he had caught a glimpse as he left Vicennes.

But his great discovery no doubt, that which induced him to tarry at Warsaw, and consoled him for Mademoiselle's disdain, was the fact that the days of his brother King Ladislas were evidently numbered.

III

The condition of the Court of Warsaw under such a leader, and the consequent effect on Marysieńka's education, may readily be imagined. But fate granted scant space for any continuity either in pleasure or in passion.

A few years, disturbed by the desperate struggle with the Cossacks, already foreseen by Ladislas, and then the great collapse, which he had also foreseen and prophesied,—the Swedish War, the invasion of Poland, the surrender of the capital, the court dispersed to the four winds of heaven, and the King and Queen flying from place to place before their merciless pursuers. At last, when the quarry was run down, the Swedes sounded the mort, and in the invaders poured

again, all the neighbours, Transylvanian, Tartar, and Prussian, rushing, naturally enough, to secure their share of the plunder.

What Marie de Gonzague was in those days of trial, and what she did for her threatened crown, and her adopted country, grateful Poland has long since proclaimed. There may even be a touch of exaggeration about this gratitude. A pathetic legend relates the story of one of the heroes of this fearful war, who had survived the numerous wounds inflicted by the Swedish foe, and still drew breath, in spite of his hacked limbs and riddled body. At the first blast of the Polish bugle, he struggled to his feet, and staggered back into the ranks. Marie de Gonzague did not, indeed, restore bodily existence to the wounded soldier who symbolises, in popular imagination, the beloved country which lived on in spite of every mutilation. But she did personify the persistent bugle blast that called each warrior back to arms, until the patiently awaited hour of glorious vengeance should strike at last. She had some valiant helpers—sons of Poland, worthy of their country's glorious past,—Potočki, Lubomirski, above all, Czarniecki,—the hardy soldier, who in reference to the territorial wealth of the Potočki, the salt works which enriched the Lubomirski, and his own wounds, was heard to say, 'It is neither to bread, nor to salt, but to what I suffer, that I owe what I am.' I fully believe that, without her, these men would have failed in their task. But for her, John-Casimir would have been the first to throw up his hands, and the country, perhaps, would have followed him into the abyss. She never turned giddy for a moment, she clung to the edge of the precipice, disputing every inch of ground, slipping back twenty times, but always recovering her footing. Under the walls of Warsaw (July, 1656), she had the horses unharnessed from her own coach, to drag some pieces of artillery into a good position, and, sitting on a drum, she directed the working of her battery. When the brave Czarniecki was escorting her, with a few squadrons of cavalry, along the road to Dantzic, she heard distant firing—

‘It is Potołki fighting the Swedes, go to his help.’

‘But—your Majesty?’

‘I will defend myself alone, if there is any need!’

M. Korzon reproaches her for not having won the Battle of Warsaw,—he has a grudge against all Poland for having acknowledged the share borne by this Frenchwoman in working out the common salvation, and against Szujski, the greatest of contemporary Polish historians, for having recognised her merit. He even goes so far as to deny her political talents, and backs his opinion by quoting those of a French Minister, and an Ambassador (De Lionne, and the Bishop of Béziers, de Bonzy), who compared her to Catherine de Medicis. Most of M. Korzon's arguments are of much the same stuff, and I agree with Szujski that they cannot shake the conviction that the more or less close resemblance, between the wife of John Casimir and the consort of Henri II. was, at this juncture, of more than a little value to her adopted country. The manner in which Marie de Gonzague rallied the nobles, armed the people, made use of the clergy,—and all with due regard to whatever extraneous assistance she could venture to reckon on,—are proofs of a courage and dexterity which cannot, in my opinion, be disputed. I cannot even believe, in spite of M. Korzon, that a proper regard for the glory of Poland necessitates the casting of any doubt upon them. The Queen negotiated with France, and Austria, and Brandenburg; at one moment she was following the military operations, at the next she was hurrying to some diplomatic meeting. She was better than the bugle blast, she was the very soul of the country's resistance—the breath of the wounded soldier, who was determined not to die.

It is in the course of one of these peregrinations, towards the close of the year 1656, that we come once more upon our Marysienka, following in her mistress's train.

CHAPTER III

MARYSIENKA'S FIRST MARRIAGE

- I. Fifteen years old—Unmarried—An unsuccessful suitor—Sobieski—The betrothal—The Prince of Zamosc—Portrait, physical and moral, of the bride—A highly descriptive document—The Chronicle of the Convent of St. Benedict—A troublesome bath—Her character summed up.
- II. Marriage—The husband's good qualities—The siege of Zamosc—A bold colloquy with the King of Sweden—The husband's faults—Disappointment—Marie de Gonzague recognises her own mistake—Marysieńka's disgust.
- III. The Queen's new anxieties—The 'Great Affair'—On the look-out for an associate—Zamoyski will not serve—The search for a substitute—On the scent—The Ring—Sobieski re-appears—France and Poland—The rising sun of the *Grand Roi*.

I

LEAVING Silesia, where, with her husband, she had been forced to seek refuge for a space, Marie de Gonzague re-entered Poland early in the month of July, 1656. The bulk of her household remained at Glogau, under the Emperor's protection, and she was only attended by six waiting women and three maids-of-honour, two Poles, Milles. Radziwill and Piotrowska, and one Frenchwoman, Mlle. d'Arquien.

Madame Galman's pupil was now fifteen years old, and extraordinarily developed for her age, both physically and mentally. She had shot up rapidly in the hothouse atmosphere of the court. The full promise of her beauty had been kept. Her charms had already earned her a sort of celebrity, and she was considered as witty as she was fair. Her precocious development had not been without its effect on her position, and, from a humble *protégée*, she had risen to be the Queen's favourite,—well-nigh her adopted daughter. Her Majesty was supposed to have great plans for her

future, and this, indeed, had hitherto prevented Marysieńka from following the example of her elders, who had all outstripped her on the road of their common hopes, and made brilliant marriages. The 'Little Duchess' had dismissed Krasinski, and married a gentleman of much greater importance, Christopher Paç, Chancellor of Lithuania. Krasinski had consoled himself by leading Mlle. de Langeron to the altar, and with her had received the Palatinate of Płock. Mlle. de Leuze had captivated another member of the Paç family. Marysieńka, too, had not lacked suitors. One of these, who had made his appearance a year before the time of which we write, had made some impression on her heart, but all he had to offer was a name of somewhat recent dignity, a handsome presence, and high hopes; and this was not enough. The suitor was Sobieski. Marysieńka was destined to marry some important personage, who—ruled, as he would not fail to be, by his wife, obedient, on her side, to the behests of her protectress—would be able, by his position, his adherents and his influence, to render important service to the crown.

So another year sped by, for the Queen had scant leisure for taking active steps to realise these plans.

But in October 1656, Her Majesty being at Wolborz, on the western frontier of the kingdom, waiting on events, a letter from Des Noyers, her French secretary, lets us into the secret of a matrimonial arrangement which seems on the point of conclusion. We read—

'Count Podlodowski, chief gentleman of the Prince of Zamosc, on his way through this place to join the King, has brought a cross with five large diamonds, valued at from 10 to 12,000 francs, from the prince his master, to Mlle. d'Arquien, the Queen's maid-of-honour, with whom he is very much in love.'

This splendid gift had been preceded, no doubt, by a formal promise of marriage, but, as the war continued, and the bridegroom was serving with the army, the ceremony was put off till less troublous times should come.

The Zamoyski were in the first rank of the Polish aristocracy. The name was famous in history. Less than a hundred years before, a Zamoyski had, so to speak, led Sigismund Vasa, the Founder of the reigning dynasty, by the hand, to the very steps of the throne, triumphed in drawn battle over his competitor, Maximilian of Austria, and taken him prisoner. The family fortune, already huge, had recently been increased by the marriage of its head with the heiress of the Duke of Ostrog. Marysienka's future husband was the only male offspring of this union, and doubtless made the fact a pretext for claiming a title which no other Zamoyski, either before or after him, was ever known to bear. He called himself Duke of Ostrog and Prince of Zamosc, and though his only position in the complicated hierarchy of Crown Officers and Dignitaries was the modest one of Cup-bearer, his name and wealth entitled him to aspire to the highest places. All he needed was to be spurred onward. He was well known to be idle, easy-going, and fond of pleasure; it was hinted, too, that he might not turn out the most agreeable of husbands, for though scarcely over thirty, he was worn-out, already, by coarse debauchery, and much addicted to drink. But, it was added, 'he was of a most amorous disposition.' He offered the lovely French girl 100,000 crowns as a wedding present, 12,000 crowns a year for pocket-money, and a yearly income of 4000 crowns, to be charged on one of his landed properties, adding that she should have 'more than that, when she had become his wife, and increased the passion he had conceived for her.' It was not fair to expect everything at once, and the person principally interested declared she was content with her bargain.

According to an anonymous biographer of King John-Casimir, Marysienka had a rival, in the shape of another of the Queen's Maids-of-honour, *Fräulein Schönsfeld*, who was protected by the King. Marie de Gonzague thought the protection was going too far, and put forward her own ward; Zamoyski allowed himself to be persuaded, and Marysienka won the day.

All witnesses agree as to her exquisite beauty,—a beauty noticeable both for regularity and charm. Her face was oval, the corners of her little mouth turned upwards scornfully, her nose was slightly aquiline, her eyes were almond-shaped, she had a mass of black hair, and her slight person (hideously thin, her female detractors called it) was adorned, according to the best informed witness of all, with treasures of grace and voluptuous beauty. Nothing however, is more delicate and risky than any attempt at psychological reconstruction, especially as affecting the Sex, and I am tempted to refer my readers to a document which strikes me as being curiously descriptive.

Let us betake ourselves to Posen, whither the Queen has journeyed a few weeks after the incident of the diamond cross, to parley with the Elector of Brandenburg. As the town possesses no Castle in which the Court can be lodged, Her Majesty has settled herself in a convent, and divided her following amongst other convents in the neighbourhood. Until a comparatively late date, these Polish cloisters preserved certain characteristics which had been common, in more remote times, to monastic institutions all over Europe—habits of hospitality which made them a god-send to travellers, and transformed them into centres of social, and, sometimes, of frivolous existence. Travellers of that period infinitely preferred convents to inns, which were far less comfortable, and, more especially, less decent, and gladly paid their score in alms and pious foundations. Mlle. d'Arquien was quartered, on this occasion, on the Convent of the Benedictine Sisters, now no longer in existence, and a Chronicle, miraculously preserved in an unpublished MS.,¹ enlightens us concerning the impression left by the fair visitor on her austere surroundings, and also, as I fain would think, concerning the effect produced on Marie de Gonzague's ward by the lessons, the influences, and the contradictory examples, now heroic, now frivolous, of

¹ In the Raczyński Library.

those other surroundings, in which her mind and person had been formed and developed.

'Mlle. d'Arquien arrived in our cloister about the season of Advent. She was the Queen's first favourite amongs her Maids-of-honour. Our Abbess gave her up her own little room, which caused her very great discomfort, so great indeed that she fell ill, and was visited by Her Majesty's physician.'

This trait is expressive and far from pleasing. It reveals the young lady's precocious scorn for the well-being of others as compared with her own. The indulgent writer, however, lays no special stress on this point, having, indeed, other and more important complaints to set forth.

'This young Lady's conduct was by no means edifying to others; even at night we were obliged to allow her doctor access to her. She was visited by many Senators, whose constant coming and going made a great disturbance.'

To give this point its full value, I must here explain that the position of Senator, in the Poland of those days, by no means coincided with those physical and moral peculiarities which we usually attribute to it in ours. Any man belonging to the national aristocracy had a fair chance of entering the Chief Assembly at an age very remote from the limit which, in our times, checks the ambitious on the threshold of the Palais du Luxembourg.

'They' (the Senators, gay young cavaliers, I fear me) 'did not hesitate to cross the Church so as to reach her. There was no peace, with all their coming and going.'

And this was not all. After telling us that the troublesome stranger was waited on by numerous servants, and by a housekeeper (Madame Galman possibly, promoted to new functions), and that the royal kitchens supplied her table (in itself a proof of her privileged position), the good nun comes to the last head of her accusation,—for an accusation

water in the Convent' (a somewhat unexpected revelation, this, even concerning a Polish convent in the seventeenth century) 'it had to be perpetually carried in by men.'

This is the final straw, but it suffices! Poor though the draughtmanship may be, the portrait stands out clear and strong. The greatest solicitude for her own personal comfort, without the smallest regard for other folks' welfare; 'I have all I want, you have nothing, so much the worse for you.' Great love of society, an extreme freedom of deportment, and an absolute scorn for opinion. Excessive care of her own person. To sum it up—self-worship, as absorbing, exacting, imperious, and all-pervading as any religion, and to serve it, a will which bears no contradiction, and ignores all difficulties,—even so far as to turn a convent upside down, to fill her bath,—and a hard-heartedness which permits its owner to go straight to the point in view, without the smallest temptation to weakness or compromise.

We shall endeavour, later, to add some touches to the picture, and we shall find material in plenty for the purpose. From this time forth, Marysieńka stands in the full light of history, and few female figures have left us more visible signs of their passage. It is almost as though she had a certain vanity in showing herself to posterity, full-face, and side-face, under the most varied aspects, and in the greatest imaginable variety of attitudes. Her private correspondence, much of which has been preserved from this period onwards, teems with information, but all the documents I might collect and bring to notice could add nothing, as regards the characteristic and fundamental features of her moral physiognomy, to the hasty but telling sketch left us by the humble daughter of St. Benedict.

II

The marriage took place in March of the following year. It was celebrated at Warsaw, after a solemn betrothal

ceremony, in the course of which the Queen, seated on her throne, set with her own hands a magnificent diamond crown, the bridegroom's gift—upon her fair ward's lovely head. The nuptial ceremony was marked by the same splendour. The bride was dressed in the Queen's own chamber, before a table on which were laid the '*lacs d'amour*' made of huge pearls, also presented by the bridegroom-elect. She was attended to church by a splendid procession, in which figured a hundred heiduques, a hundred footmen, eighty grooms, eighteen pages, and six trumpeters, of the Zamoyski household. At the wedding banquet three hundred casks of Hungarian wine were emptied to her health, and finally, the bride was conducted on her road to Zamosc by their Polish Majesties in person.

But Marie de Gonzague was soon to regret her choice, and Marysienka was to share her disappointment.

The Prince (Marysienka never spoke of her husband otherwise) was not devoid of all good qualities. He had proved his valour during the war; he had victoriously withstood a siege at Zamosc, and had exchanged colloquies in true Homeric style, with his adversary, the King of Sweden himself. The monarch, having fired two hundred cannon shots into the town, grew anxious to make terms with the powerful magnate, and sent him a flag of truce, bearing his excuses for the damage done, and the most honourable and advantageous offers if he would surrender.

'Do not let his Majesty disturb himself, he has killed nothing but one pig; he can go on if he chooses, without causing me the slightest inconvenience.'

The Swedish messenger was replaced by a Pole, a Count Sapieha, who had joined the invader, and whose powers of persuasion might, it was thought, prove greater. Zamoyski refused to open his gates to him, vowing he would have no traitors within them. Then came a third emissary, and a third jeering answer. 'I see how it is!' quoth Zamoyski. 'Time hangs heavy on his Majesty's hands,—I must send some of my fiddlers!'

At last the king, weary of fighting, caring little whether he held the fortress or not, and finding that the movements of the enemy's troops rendered it dangerous for him to remain where he was, decided to decamp. He made a final effort to obtain a free passage along a road which ran beneath the ramparts, and would have saved him several leagues journey. Zamoyski would not hear of it; he wanted that road for expeditions of his own; it was carnival-time, he desired to amuse himself, and begged his pleasures might not be disturbed again, there had been enough of it already. And his Majesty was fain to depart by the longest route.

From the point of view of military talent, the prince was a poor soldier. On campaign, his companions in arms did their best to avoid him, as they would have avoided a dangerous shot out hunting. He made amends for it in times of peace, living freely, a gay boon-companion, open-handed and open-hearted, superbly hospitable. All this brought him popularity of a sort, but gave little satisfaction either to Marysieńka or to her royal mistress. Not only was he a hard drinker and a martyr to gout, which did not help to render him the pleasantest of husbands, but it soon grew clear that, politically speaking, nothing could be made of him. In vain was the Palatinate of Sandomir conferred on him—he drank not a drop the less, and seemed not a whit more anxious to play his part in the government of his country. He plunged deeper and deeper, on the contrary, into his habits of careless indolence, and even left his friends the care of managing his household.

Marie de Gonzague chafed, and her ward grew disgusted. Neither the advantages of a semi-royal state, nor even the joys of maternity—she bore three children in quick succession—consoled Marysieńka for being wedded to a boor, who had naught of the prince about him save the name, stank of wine like an innkeeper, swore like a trooper, and did not even seem capable of appreciating the charms of which he was the happy possessor.

The children born of this ill-assorted union came into

the world puny and sickly, and left it without delay. One after the other, Marysienka buried them, and, saddened as she was by her loss, with no gaiety about her, save scenes of drunkenness, the horrid sight of which she would fain have avoided, the Castle of Zamosc soon became an odious prison in her eyes.

III

She did not fail to take refuge from it, in frequent visits to Warsaw,—her occasional presence there only heightening her own regret and the Queen's. Court life, rich in those pleasures and intrigues in which Zamoyski was incapable of bearing his part, was raising its head again, after the days of trial lately undergone. And the Queen, freed from the anxieties that had overwhelmed her, was turning back, now that her crown and the integrity of her kingdom seemed fairly safe, to that which had always attracted her so powerfully—the great world of politics. Her ardent imagination, her fertile mind and indomitable energy, were carrying her in a new direction; she was meditating a 'great affair' which interested her deeply, and which, she hoped, would revolutionise the country, and a good half of Europe. How useful for the purposes of this great plan, necessitating co-operation most difficult to ensure, would be the services of a young and beautiful woman, free from all scruple, and already learned in the delicate management and crafty manipulation of human consciences and wills! Zamoyski, who refused to join his wife at Warsaw, and called imperiously on her to return to him, stood in the way. The marriage was certainly absurd. But how could that which was done already be undone? And besides, Marysienka alone would not suffice. Some man must stand beside her—some man who was not like Zamoyski.

Suddenly a light flashed through the Queen's brain. Certain indiscretions, trifles noticed during the fair Palatine's last stay at Warsaw, a ring, which, disappearing from her

finger, re-appeared on that of a brilliant cavalier, had put Her Majesty on a scent, which soon led her up to most interesting and encouraging discoveries. A man there was, on the spot, who, though he had not married Marysieńka, was even at that instant under her sway, and who, further, seemed to possess the qualities necessary for carrying out the great work, and acting as corner stone to the projected edifice. He was a soldier, who had already won honour on the battlefield ; his favour with the army and the people was growing day by day. Why should he not fill the place on the political chess-board which that other had disdained ? He had already replaced him elsewhere. The Queen believed him capable of playing a foremost part, and she was right. The man was Sobieski.

As for the 'great affair,' I will endeavour, as briefly as possible, to explain its nature, and I shall have no fear of imposing too severe a tax upon the patience of my readers, at all events ; for the story I shall have to tell is a chapter, and by no means the least captivating, out of their own history. The relations between the country of my birth and that of my adoption have, during past centuries, seen many phases, good and evil, including mutual indifference, and eventual abandonment. Never were they more full of interest than during the second half of the seventeenth century, when the glorious beams of the rising sun of the *Grand Roi* seemed destined to fuse the destinies of two widely parted realms.

CHAPTER IV

WARSAW AND CHANTILLY

1. The 'Great Affair'—First appearance of the *Grand Roi*—A bold attempt—Beginnings—Marie de Gonzague seeks an heir—Negotiations at Paris and Vienna—The Archduke Charles—The Longuevilles—Mazarin intervenes—A stormy conversation—The Cardinal triumphs—Neuburg or Mercœur—Intervention of the Princess Palatine—Lubomirski—The final choice—The Duc d'Anguien—He is to marry the Queen of Poland's niece—Letters-Patent sent to Chantilly—Caillet despatched to Poland—The campaign opens.
- II. Early successes and reverses—Pecuniary assistance—Louis XIV. *will have no disappointment*—A Princess sacrificed—Austria discomfited—A fresh disaster—Lubomirski turns his coat—A chameleon policy—Anarchists, high and low—General view of Polish politics—The Diet—The *Liberum Veto*—The Representative of Universal Suffrage—Negotiations—Victory reported.
- III. Doubt reigns at St. Germain—Disgust—*Nothing to be done with these brute beasts*—'Gentle means' abandoned—Treaty with Sweden—Marie de Gonzague will not face civil war—The Polish army revolts—The Polish *Confederations*—Alarm in France—Louis XIV. and De Lionne—Prudent counsels prevail—Marie de Gonzague attempts a *coup d'état* in the Italian manner—Failure—Rupture of the Swedish Treaty—Apparent close of the drama.
- IV. A mere interlude—Condé replaces D'Anguien—D'Anguien marries the Queen of Poland's niece—'The heiress'—Correspondence between Warsaw and Chantilly—A curious specimen of cryptography.
- V. Events take a tragic turn—Lubomirski arms—A prospect of civil war—The search for a champion—Marie de Gonzague's uncertainty—'I have him'—Sobieski.¹

I

THE impression left on the mind of the historian who, like myself, has endeavoured to penetrate the mystery enshroud-

¹ For all this part of my story I have consulted the unpublished documents in the Chantilly Archives (from which I have drawn the bulk of my information), together with those preserved in the Paris Foreign Office and in the National Archives, some extracts from which I published in 1889.

ing the episode I shall now endeavour to describe, is one of surprise—I had almost said of bewilderment. How trifling is the mark left by the 'Great Affair' in history! Yet how many, and what great folk, were concerned in it! The student finds piles of correspondence, signed with the greatest names in contemporary politics—Mazarin himself at their head. When the Cardinal drops the pen, it is taken up by De Lionne, who has left us such lines as these—

'The King having ordered M. Le Tellier, some days since, to draw up an account of all the general expenses likely to be necessary for this Polish business, His Majesty, when M. Le Tellier brought him the account, immediately changed his mind, saying it was superfluous to look at the said account for purposes of deliberation, and that it was only necessary to provide the requisite funds, as he was determined to bear all the expense, whatever the sum to which it might amount.'

The King whose will was thus declared, was Louis XIV., who, some months later, thus writes with his own hand—

'As I can say, with truth, that I continually give my principal care to the affairs of Poland, *which I consider the most important in Christendom at the present time*, I also look with impatience for the plan concerning them which has been promised me.'

This was written in 1665, while France was at war with England, and negotiating with Portugal to re-open hostilities with Spain. And more was shortly to come. De Lionne himself, noting his sovereign's last orders, under the date of 8th April 1667, shows symptoms of bewilderment.

'His Majesty's resolutions are entirely personal to himself; no man on earth would have dared to take upon him to offer such advice.'

The proposal was, in fact, to send the great Condé himself to Poland, with a body of nine or ten thousand men.

How? Wherefore? I will do my best to explain. This expedition was entirely the personal idea of the *Grand Roi*.

Some objection having been made to the passage of his army across German soil, it had been seriously proposed to send it in small batches of fifteen or twenty foot-soldiers or cavalry, which were to travel separately and independently, and muster at some fortress on the Polish frontier. This plan was none of De Lionne's making. It is marked by a certain whimsicality, a disdain for common rules, and taste for trying unknown chances. The 'great affair' for Poland, between the years 1660 and 1667, was the entrance upon the scene of a student escaped from Mazarin's school—the dawn of the *Roi Soleil*. This marked the beginning of the long-drawn struggle which was to set the Houses of France and Austria at each other's throats—a struggle full of dangerous vicissitudes, foreshadowed by the risky enterprise to which we have just referred.

The Polish electors had not been disappointed in their hope that the union of Marie de Gonzague and John-Casimir might prove childless. Not, indeed, that the ex-Jesuit neglected his conjugal duties. A letter from the King to the Queen, written before a meeting following on several weeks of separation, exonerates him in this particular: '*Spero*,' he writes, '*che almeno per la prima sera non mello negarete il vostro (letto), dopo un sì gran tempo che non sene siamo visti.*'

Marie de Gonzague did, in fact, become a mother, twice over. She bore a daughter in 1650, and a son in 1652, but neither of these children lived. Tried by these sorrows, and losing all hope of future maternity, she turned her thoughts at last to some other means of ensuring the future of the inheritance which she had so steadfastly defended against numerous assailants—some expedient which would seem likely, at the same time, to serve the general interests of her policy. She therefore charged the Grand Treasurer, Leszczyński—ancestor of the future father-in-law of Louis XV., who had been sent, in 1667, to Vienna, to crave the Emperor's help against the Swedes—to make offers and sign agreements, the meaning and value of which were

later on to rouse much discussion, but whose momentary and ostensible effect was to bestow the title of Prince Royal of Poland on the Archduke Charles of Austria.

Marie de Gonzague's detractors, and a few, indeed, of her admirers, have accused her, on this point, of short-sightedness, and even of a certain paltriness of view. The succession to the Polish throne certainly called for settlement, and the Austrian alliance might, at that critical moment, have been very useful to the country. But in the minds of a certain section of Poles (far too small, alas!), the first of these needs was connected with a project for general reform, whereby the political institutions of the country were to be strengthened and brought into harmony with the contemporary organisation of neighbouring nations. Marie de Gonzague, it is said, overlooked this side of the question, and gave no thought to anything but her own family interests and dynastic anxieties.

This accusation appears to me somewhat less than just. It is too much to ask that Mazarin's pupil should have reformed Poland, after saving it from dismemberment. She believed, doubtless, that the prince, Austrian or French, on whom, at one time or another, she determined to bestow the reversion of her husband's birthright, would endeavour to establish his power on a less fragile basis than her consort's. She may be taken to have hoped it with all her heart, and more than this she could not do. Did her eagerness as to the carrying out of the more personal side of her double programme compromise its second portion, as has been hinted? That may be. She was a woman of extreme courage; she was not a woman of extraordinary self-sacrifice.

The Emperor, indeed, was the first to realise this, when, having fulfilled his part, and helped her to drive the invader out, he sought to obtain the reward of his successful intervention. An unforeseen obstacle barred his way. The transaction on which he based his claim was, all unsuspected by him, a conditional one on the Queen of Poland's part.

She had recollected, early or late, that she had a sister in France, to whom she was 'tenderly attached,' and a niece, 'whose interests' she 'could not sacrifice.'

The lady in question was the Princess Palatine, who, on her side, had been given little cause to suspect the affection she inspired, since the day when, just after her sister's betrothal to King Ladislas, she had written to her.

'I beseech you, do not forget me, do not let me starve ; . . . at all events, let me have leave to be present at your marriage, let me have the joy of seeing you !'

She had been left to get out of her difficulties as best she could, and had succeeded admirably. Cast off by her archbishop, and unhappily married to a doubtful Palatine, she had pushed herself in politics, thanks to her first-rate talents as a go-between, and now stood triumphant, one foot in the Court, the other in the Princes' party, sought by every one, feared by all, and commensurately rewarded. She was the mother of two daughters, the second of whom, Anne, clever, though far from pretty, was considered, thanks to the maternal influence, a very desirable *parti*.

So 'my daughter!' cried Marie de Gonzague suddenly. Her maternal instincts were stirred, in a flash, at the thought of the niece she had so long ignored. She forthwith confiscated her, as in days gone by she had confiscated the Duchy of Nevers, and clung passionately to her conquest. Passionate she was, about everything she did. If the Archduke Charles desired to reign over Poland, he must begin by marrying the Princess Anne, who should at once be recognised as Princess Royal of Poland.

At first Vienna turned a deaf ear ; then the Emperor changed his mind. Alarming news had reached him from France. Marie de Gonzague had been shrewd enough to open a second negotiation there. Towards the end of 1657, her former lady of honour, Mme. des Essarts, who had gone back to Paris, and there acted as the Queen's correspondent and intimate confidante, had set about to feel her way, and collect information. A move was first made in the direction of

the De Longueville family. The great Condé's sister had two sons: the eldest, the Comte de St. Paul, seemed the evident and proper husband for the Princess Palatine's eldest daughter. The younger, Dunois, might marry the second girl, and come to reign over Poland.

At first Mme. de Longueville listened somewhat coldly to these proposals. She had retired to Rouen, and was absorbed, for the moment, by dreams of devotion and self-denial. But religious influences were brought into play. M. Vincent—St. Vincent de Paul himself, the revered Head of the Priests of the Mission and of the Sisters of Charity, a man whom one hardly expects to see mixed up in matters of this kind, but who did occasionally condescend to interest himself in them—entered into correspondence with the Princess's chaplain, the Abbé Aubert. These letters are at Chantilly, and are all in favour of the plan.

Then it was M. de Longueville's turn to make objections. He had been told he must risk two millions. He went first of all to two hundred thousand crowns, and then to four, but an attempt was made in Poland to induce him to double his investment, and the negotiation dragged.

Nevertheless it sufficed to disturb the Viennese Court. In December of that same year, Baron Lisola, the negotiator of the recent treaty between Austria and Poland, who had been sent on a mission to Warsaw, was given orders 'to agree to everything the Queen of Poland might ask.'

But the last word from France had not yet been heard. In 1657, Mazarin was still an oracle in that country, and when he intervened in the debate, a dialogue containing an amusing mixture of the methods of contemporary diplomacy, mingled with some personal features peculiar to the Cardinal himself, forthwith commenced.

'Did the Queen of Poland imagine he would sit tamely by, and see an Austrian Archduke take a French Princess to his bed, and set one of the fairest crowns of Europe on his head? To ensure the success of such a plan, the Princess should have been at Warsaw; but she was in France,

and there *she should stay*—they might believe the Cardinal's word—unless, indeed, she herself decided to marry a Frenchman. In that case, no transaction would be possible. Her Polish Majesty might make any arrangement she liked with Austria. If she chose to add her promise to give her niece to an Austrian, she might be perfectly certain she would not find herself in a position to fulfil her engagements.'

Marie de Gonzague took some time—until 1659—to recognise all the force of this argument ; after that she submitted. So be it; she would accept a French Prince as her son-in-law. But which? As the De Longuevilles seemed inclined to retire, her eyes naturally turned towards Chantilly. She had not failed to intervene, during his captivity in the year 1651, in favour of the hero of Rocroy. She had rejoiced to place all her credit at his disposal, through Mme. de Châtillon and President Viole. Condé's son, the Duc d'Anguien, would be a candidate whom all parties could support. But Mazarin made fresh objections. 'Was he not on the point of signing the Treaty of the Pyrenees, which would, in a sense, oblige him to forgive the great rebel, and permit him to return to France? And he was actually asked to favour fresh ambitious plans of his! It was too much! And besides, he had candidates of his own to propose—one, amongst others, who seemed to him worthy of all preference, the Duke of Neuburg, to wit, whose son should marry the Queen's niece. If this proposal was not welcome, there was a second candidate, to whom, if he was agreeable to the Polish Queen, no objection would be made in France, although the Cardinal did not personally desire to secure a kingdom for him. Would two hundred thousand crowns suffice to ensure his chances? Mazarin would, if necessary, find the sum out of his own pocket, in spite of his personal indifference to this particular selection. He trusted this was thoroughly understood. All his leanings were in favour of Neuburg, unless, indeed, the second candidate, with the two hundred thousand crowns, should appear more

acceptable. He was a well-built prince, to boot, of high intelligence and noble feelings.'

'Who was this prince?'

'Prince Almeric d'Este.'

'The Duke of Modena's brother, Laure Martinozzi's brother-in-law, the Cardinal's own nephew by marriage?'

'Precisely. An excellent future king, and the most desirable of husbands.'

So desirable, in fact, that, as everybody knew, Mazarin had long intended him to marry Hortense Mancini, his favourite niece, and sole heiress.

'But, as everybody also knew, he was a man of self-sacrificing spirit, and besides, he really had not the smallest special attachment for this plan, and was quite ready to adopt another. Would the Poles prefer a prince of riper age, and a real Bourbon? There was the Duc de Mercœur, the son of César de Vendôme, and grandson of Henri IV.'

And happy husband of another tenderly beloved niece—but to that fact the Cardinal made no reference.

A courier, despatched from Aix in Provence, on the 26th of February 1659—my readers will perceive that the neighbourhood of the Ile des Faisans, and the preparations for the diplomatic battle he was about to wage there, did not prevent Mazarin from giving thought to Poland—conveyed this triple proposal to Warsaw.

It was received in the most chilly fashion. The Cardinal must be making game. One prince almost in swaddling-clothes—the Duke of Neuburg's son was only eight years of age; another of doubtful birth—the legitimacy of Alfonso di Ferrara's living descendants, amongst whom the Duke of Modena and his brother were numbered, being strongly contested; and an authenticated bastard—grandson of the fair Gabrielle d'Estrées. There was little enough to choose between them! And two hundred thousand crowns to overcome the disgust that any one of these candidates was certain to raise in Poland! The Cardinal was certainly

joking! Two hundred thousand crowns to purchase royalty for Mlle. de Mancini! The idea was most offensive!

But the Cardinal did not give an inch. 'He was not the least stiff-necked about the matter; he should not have thought of Mercœur, if the Princess Palatine herself had not first mentioned him. Nobody would have him? Then he put him out of the question. But that by no means meant that he would not have been ready to lay out more than two hundred thousand crowns on this occasion. Had he really said two hundred thousand crowns? If so, it must have been as a first instalment. How much exactly would be expected? As for the fault which might be found with the Duc de Vendôme's extraction, he honestly acknowledged he had never thought of that. And where indeed were such blemishes not to be discovered? The descent of the Longuevilles was, no doubt, more irreproachable, and yet, had not the *Beau Dunois* been known as "the Bastard of Orleans"? This indiscreet curiosity, which actually violated the intimacy of conjugal existence, was pitiful, and most displeasing to the Almighty. The Cardinal's pious feelings were outraged, and he could not forgive the Poles. But it was their own affair. They would not have De Mercœur, they should have Neuburg. The essential point was that no Austrian was to hold the position.'

'The essential point for France,' replied Marie de Gonzague, 'but not for Poland,' and so the wrangle continued—passionate and violent on one side, cold and measured on the other.¹

'The essential matter for Poland was to have a king that would suit her. Now, neither Mercœur nor Modena could possibly do that, not even if millions were spent for the purpose. Yes, two millions, at least, were necessary, if the Cardinal insisted on making the attempt. But they were not worth discussing, nor Neuburg either. He would not

¹ The matter and the full terms of this discussion will be found amongst the papers of the French Foreign Office, in the Correspondence between Mazarin and the Marquis de Lumbres (1657-1660, Poland).

be accepted. Had the Cardinal any other proposal to make? None! Then the matter was settled; the Emperor's Envoy was waiting.'

'And the Princess Anne was still in France.' The answer came back, short and sharp, and fresh negotiations, on a new footing, were begun.

In January 1660, the Queen's faithful Secretary, Des Noyers, betook himself to Vienna, and returned, closely followed by a courier, who bore a formal proposal from the Arch-Duke Charles, for the hand of the Princess Anne. Still Mazarin did not budge. He had spoken his mind concerning the chances of this Austrian alliance, and he took back nothing. As to the De Longuevilles and the D'Anguiens, they were French Princes, for whom, as a matter of principle, he could not do otherwise than desire a most brilliant future. But the Treaty of the Pyrenees had just forbidden the Prince de Condé to keep up correspondence with any foreign country, and the moment seemed ill-chosen for placing him in such intimate relations with Poland. There should be no such doings with Warsaw as those which had taken place with Madrid. And back the Cardinal came to his Neuburg. Neuburg was a German Prince, he held one of the passages across the Rhine, and that fact had a certain importance. Here was a unique opportunity for France to acquire a double and formidable strategic position, both in the rear of the Empire, and on its front. The Queen of Poland, who was French by blood, and French, as the Cardinal hoped at heart, must understand the situation.

But, on this particular point, Marie de Gonzague's feelings and her powers of comprehension seemed dulled, and her sister, the Princess Palatine, gave the Cardinal no help in remedying matters. She too, guided by her natural inclinations, and counselled by her very sure and practical instincts, had shaped her course on Chantilly, and would not shift her helm. The Duc d'Anguien, even without the Polish crown, was a very desirable *parti*. But, like the cunning politician she was, she laid her plans so as to give the Cardinal a

partial interest in her own maternal ambition. Her eldest daughter Benedicte, a Princess condemned to play the most thankless parts, should pay, if necessary, for her sister's elevation, by marrying M. de Mancini. To this end, the Princess toiled, intrigued, plotted, stirred up the city and the Court.

So successful was she, that Mazarin's resolution was shaken at last. Further, a despatch from Akakia, his agent at Dantzig, had brought him food for reflection. This document, dated 6th March 1660, announced the appearance on the scene of a fresh figure, destined to play a decisive part in the impending drama. It mentioned proposals made by the Emperor to the Grand Marshal of the Polish kingdom, George Lubomirski.

This great noble, the holder of the highest Court office, and of one of the greatest landed properties in Poland—responsible, besides, for the general police of the kingdom, with a small army in his pay, half a dozen fortresses at his disposal, and ambition commensurate with his power—was a thorough specimen of the Polish kinglet. He had, fortunately, turned a deaf ear to the Imperial voice, and, won over by Marie de Gonzague, had set his name to a declaration signed by the principal magnates in favour of the Duc d'Anguien, which the zealous Akakia had undertaken to convey to France. He had done better yet, and was himself on his way to Paris, to increase the weight of this expression of the common longing by his own presence.

Any further attempt at resistance would have been folly. And after having tried to gain more time, pretended first to be over-busy, and then to be sick in bed, after having, it may be, undergone the final pressure of that imperious will which was shortly to prove its resolution and determination in this very particular, Mazarin gave in. Towards the end of October, the news of the definite acceptance of the Duc d'Anguien's suit reached the Polish Court, where it was received with a delight which augured well for the future. In vain did the Court of Vienna attempt a last desperate

effort, passing suddenly from the most tempting offers to the most open threats. 'Once joined to France, Poland has nothing to fear from any one,' was Marie de Gonzague's scornful rejoinder, and on the 30th of November, a patent drawn up in the following form, and bearing the signature of Louis XIV. was conveyed to the Lord of Chantilly.

'Being convinced it is good, and even desirable, that M. le Prince de Condé should think of the succession to the Crown of Poland, for M. le Duc d'Anguien, his son, in accordance with the overtures and proposals which have been made to his Majesty by the Queen of Poland . . . His Majesty has permitted, and does permit, the said Prince de Condé and Duc d'Anguien, without any regard to the said Articles of the said Treaty of Peace—(Articles of the Treaty of the Pyrenees above mentioned) to have, and to keep up, intercourse with Poland.'

The Sieur Caillet, appointed to the office of correspondent and special resident, for this object, received his passports and instructions, and orders and powers in accordance were transmitted to the king's ambassador in Poland, the Marquis de Lumbres. Two hundred thousand crowns were sent to Dantzic, in the quickest and most secret manner possible. A Polish gentleman (Gonski?), attached to the Duc d'Anguien's person, undertook to teach him the language of his future subjects—and thus the curtain rises on one of the most curious dramas in the political repertoire of that period.

II

As King John-Casimir was still alive, it was necessary to ensure the succession by means of an immediate appeal to that electoral power, of which the national nobility could by no means be deprived. There was no lack of precedents. In 1548, the last of the Jagellons, Sigismund-Augustus, had reaped the benefit of such an anticipatory election. But he had succeeded his own father. Would the Diet which

was to meet in 1661 overlook the difference between the circumstances? Marie de Gonzague neglected nothing which was likely to secure its support. As for the king, he held aloof, for a considerable time, from a business which involved a constant discussion of his own death. Since the war with Sweden, the Queen had, in fact, to some extent, substituted her own authority for his. In those days of trial, she had proved herself the real pilot of the labouring ship, she still kept the helm, and he, out of natural weakness and hopeless indifference, submitted. 'The Queen,' says the historian Rudawski, forcibly, 'drove the king as a little Ethiopian drives his elephant;' leading him, according to a contemporary memoir writer, Jerlicz, 'like a bear on a chain.'

By the month of December 1660, she held two documents, signed by the Primate, by all the Ministers, by three out of four Hetmans, and a great number of Senators. The first, for public use, contained an undertaking to elect 'a successor who should marry his Majesty's niece;' the second, which was to be kept provisionally in the background, nominated the Duc d'Anguien. This last document, until the very eve of the Parliamentary session, was only to be revealed to a very limited number of 'helpers.' Such a precaution suffices in itself to show the difficulties of the enterprise. The Hetman of Lithuania, Sapieha, had not been gained over. The mood of the petty nobility was very uncertain, and Lisola, after an absence of several months, had just announced his return to Warsaw. He was not likely to reappear empty-handed.

For a time everything seemed to go merrily, both in Poland and in France. In the first country, the preparatory assemblies (small Diets for electing the Deputies) showed most encouraging results, and in the second, the death of Mazarin, in March 1661, removed the last lingering fear of any return to the difficulties of former days. Soon, indeed, De Lionne's despatches betoken a recrudescence of the French king's ardour for the success of the great plan. 'His Majesty,' he

wrote, 'is hotter and more excited on the subject than ever.' And signs of this soon appeared. The powers sent to the Marquis de Lumbres were extended to the point of a promise of active assistance against the Emperor, and even against the Elector of Brandenburg, and a proposal to negotiate a defensive alliance with Sweden, while the subsidies were to be increased to several millions. Caillet had asked for four. This was a heavy sum. But one million, at all events, was to be sent before the opening of the Diet, and another as soon as the election was secure—without reckoning the 600,000 livrès already despatched to Dantzic. And indeed, if, when the last moment came, and 'the bell was actually to be cast,' a still greater effort should appear necessary, the King would go as far as 1,800,000 francs. To conclude, the fact that 'gentle means' might not suffice, had also been foreseen, and even in such a case, 'His Majesty was so perfectly aware of the importance of the matter, was so passionately desirous of success, and believed both his interest, and in a sense, his honour, so deeply engaged, . . . that there was nothing within his power which he would not do *to avoid disappointment and the disgrace of failure.* . . . If the two countries had not been so far removed from each other, there might have been a clearer understanding as to the assistance, that is to say, the troops, to be sent. But nothing within the bounds of possibility would be neglected, and the Prince himself should bear witness to it.'

The matter, in fact, seemed steadily advancing, when, of a sudden, clouds darkened the Polish horizon. Cries of distress resounded from Warsaw. 'Lubomirski was putting a spoke in the wheel.' What! the Grand Marshal, the very man who had travelled to Paris to prove his devotion to the cause? Alack! he had come back by Vienna, and was now engaged in sowing revolution amongst the lesser nobles, stirring up the army, and conspiring with the acknowledged adversaries of the 'plan.' He had, it was whispered, been offered twelve towns in Hungary, if he would support

young Rakoczy's candidature, and he was 'turning his coat.'

It was but a false alarm. The Marshal did, it is true appear 'reserved,' and 'anything but prepossessed,' during a conversation with the Marquis de Lumbres, who, on his part, was far too brusque, and demanded, without preamble, to know 'how much?' But the magnate's answer, evasive and haughty as it was, implied no absolute closing of the question. 'In his country,' he declared, 'men listened to offers, they never made requests.' And immediately afterwards, with the Queen's confidant, the Grand Referendary Morsztyn, he showed far less reserve, opened out, and named his price. He demanded a blank patent, appointing him to the office of Crown Hetman—the actual holder of which, Potocki, was already an aged man—and the hand of Princess Benedicte, sister of the future Queen of Poland, for his own son.

Marie de Gonzague was greatly agitated, and a stormy discussion with Caillet ensued.

It was too much, she declared, to ask her to sacrifice her niece.

Pooh! she had been sacrificed already, when it was decided she was to marry Mancini. Sacrifice was her predestined fate!

The bargain was struck at last, and Lisola, who was already putting on airs of triumph, retired in discomfiture. In vain he returned to the charge, beseeching the Marshal to give him the option of 'a higher bid.' The Marshal was no longer for sale. As for the Hetman of Lithuania, who had been sold by his wife to the Elector of Brandenburg, 1000 ducats slipped into the fair lady's hand, and a credit assigned her husband on the funds expected at Dantzic, convinced him that his former undertaking no longer bound him.

By the beginning of June 1661, Lisola, whose correspondence, for several months past, had been regularly intercepted by the French Cabinet, was reduced to

meditating a *passo concetto* with the Duc d'Anguien. This having failed, he ventured another attempt, and caught his own house-steward at the door of the residence of the deputy representing Greater Poland in the Upper Chamber, with a bag of money on his back. Hence great stir and scandal, all of which helped on the French cause. But suddenly the tide swung back again. The Diet opened; the King's speech, afterwards referred to as prophetic, eloquently denounced the dangers of a political régime resting on chances so uncertain. His words seemed to have won all votes, when three Castellans (amongst them the Castellan of Leopol, one of Lubomirski's adherents) made open and hostile protest. No sooner was the debate opened in the Upper Chamber than the dreaded words *Niema zgody* ('not content,' the usual form of the *liberum veto*) rang out from a group of four deputies, in the Marshal's pay.

Had he turned his coat again, the faithless wretch? 'The natural chameleon qualities of that man,' writes Morsztyn in a letter to Caillet, 'are beyond all comprehension!' At this distance of time, the phenomenon appears capable of explanation, without any necessity, nor, indeed, possibility of recourse, like the *chameleon's* apologists, to the supposition that his conscience, his principles, and his scruples, had all risen in sudden revolt, startled by the illegal procedure which was beginning to mark the 'great affair.'

Conscience, principles, scruples, indeed! in connection with a man who was shortly to raise the standard of civil war against his own country, and accept foreign assistance for the purpose!

The *chameleon* was simply a great Polish noble, the complete and perfect type of an aristocracy, which, a century later, was to send soldiers to Kosciuszko, and courtiers to Catherine—the same men occasionally playing the double parts. He was a warrior, as gifted as he was bold, a statesman of rare ability, and of a sagacity rarer still, and, in his own way, and at certain times, a patriotic citizen. He was to give proof of all these qualities—fighting successfully

against Swedes and Muscovites, and recoiling before the consequences of yet another victory, which was to place the royal family against which he was even now plotting, at his mercy. But he contributed, and with terrible success, to the downfall of his own country. How so? Because he was that fatal monster with two faces—the inevitable outcome of his licentious surroundings. For licence has always, at every period, and under every latitude, borne the self-same fruit. He was an anarchist in high places, clasping hands with the anarchists below him. What was his first object? He desired, to start with, to ‘play first fiddle,’ to ensure that nothing should be done, or left undone, except through him. Not that he aspired to the highest place in the state. He denied all personal ambition, and this denial may have been sincere. But he was keenly conscious, at the same time, of the fact that he represented the popular will. A short time previously he had eagerly espoused the cause of the Duc d’Anguien, because by making it his own he had hoped to force it on his following of country gentlemen. In this belief, he had set forth bravely; but once on the road, he noticed that few of the country gentlemen below him were walking in his steps, and on his own higher plane he found himself surrounded by a troop of uncongenial companions—*parvenus*, like Sobieski, whom the Queen was beginning to honour, and foreigners, such as Des Noyers, Frenchmen, Italians, De Brion, De Buy, Borelli, Boratini—all of whom claimed the right to serve the great work, and would, no doubt, claim their part in the future reward. Then he stopped short, and suddenly changed his course. Fickle and versatile he was, and always was to be—the representative of the mob, itself fickle, changeable, essentially chameleon-like. Swiftly he had sent out fresh commands, and under his encouragement the cry of *Niema zgody* gathered strength, growling deeper and louder, the stormy clamour rising to the tribune in which Marie de Gonzague sat, watching the destruction of her hopes.

The Queen was just about to retire, in despair, when a

message was delivered to Her Majesty. The Grand Marshal very humbly solicited an audience, so that he might justify himself. That meant to discuss terms! In a fury, she tore the note across. Never! . . . But she calmed down—too wise a woman to let her temper interfere with matters of policy. The Grand Marshal was summoned to her presence.

Lubomirski has given proof of his omnipotence. What has happened, he declares, would never have occurred if the Queen had confided in him, and him alone. But if she will consent to do so now, he is quite ready to repair the mischief. But how? The Marshal explains. The people may be managed, if he is left to do it, but he alone possesses the necessary knowledge and power. One Diet may re-make what another has undone, provided such a Diet is convoked by a *senatus consultum*, which sets forth the object of the convocation, and the desire of a majority amongst the Senators that the object shall be fulfilled. But will the people—that is, the nobles, the only people who count in Poland—agree to this expedient? They will, if it is Lubomirski who takes the initiative, and assumes responsibility. Can the Queen doubt his credit? If he interferes, the whole thing will be accepted as being done in the name of universal suffrage, and under the safeguard of the great principles of the constitution. So convinced is the Marshal of this fact, that he presides at the distribution of French coin made on the occasion, and claims his own share. M. Korzon accuses me of having slandered Lubomirski in this particular. That is a very hard word, applied to a very trifling matter. M. Korzon admits that others thrust their hands into the same purse, and that the nobleman in question accepted money from other, and foreign, hands, with the aggravating circumstance that he used subsidies given him by the Elector of Brandenburg, or the Emperor, to fight against the government of his own country.¹ My own information is drawn from a despatch sent by Caillet to the great Condé (28th July 1661: *French*

¹ *Fortunes, good and evil, of John Sobieski*, pp. 318-320.

Foreign Office Papers), and, for the greater part of his story, M. Korzon does not refer to any different authority. To treat these despatches as idle tales, after having made use of them in support of his theories, would be to carry his apology for the man who 'changed his coat' to the verge of imitation.

The Polish magnate, however, either deliberately exaggerated his own power, or overestimated its extent. Yet there was a certain amount of truth in his idea. Poland is a country which, at a very early period in its history, had reached and sounded the deepest depths, and utmost possibilities, of free institutions.

An understanding was reached at last, and Marie de Gonzague sent a triumphant report to St. Germain.

III

At St. Germain she was written down over-confident and easily satisfied. This first experience of the Polish parliament at once led Louis XIV. to the conclusion (arrived at later, after long years of intercourse, by one of his own agents), that 'there was nothing to be done with those brute beasts.' This did not imply that the King was resigned to a *disappointment*, it only meant that by parity of reasoning, he argued 'gentle means' to be useless. Very opportunely, as it fell out, he had just given audience to a Swedish envoy, lately arrived in Paris, who offered him a free hand in all Polish affairs, on the sole condition that 'Austria, Muscovy, and Brandenburg should be excluded from the succession to the throne.' These were golden words. The envoy was sent for again, closeted with the King, and, towards the end of September 1661, the Queen of Poland's courier returned to her, bearing news of a treaty which stipulated for the help of 12,000 men, '6000 Swedes and 6000 Germans, seasoned troops,' who, in return for a payment of 400,000 crowns, were to be held in readiness to enter Poland on the first summons. In case of necessity, the Prince de Condé himself

was to take command of this little army, and of whatever other forces might be collected to meet him.

Here was a bold step towards 'extraordinary measures. But would Marie de Gonzague adopt them? Yes, for her returning courier was to find her already disappointed in her late illusions. True, the *senatus consultum* had been signed, but at the same time news had arrived of the formation, in the very heart of the army, of a *Confederation* to resist the 'expected election.' My readers are aware of the part played in Polish history by these revolutionary syndicates, which, by the most absurd conception of the Democratic ideal, were permitted to take an arbitrary position, above all established law. Once a *Confederation* came into existence, neither Senate, nor Diet, nor authority of any kind, had any weight in the eyes of those who composed it; and if the syndicate, being the strongest, won the day, it imposed laws on all the rest. It became the only legal authority. It was, in fact, the revolutionary theory put into regular and periodical practice, and sanctioned by the constitution. Now there was a fair chance that the new syndicate, just entering on the scene, with shouts of 'Down with d'Anguien, death to the French, and to their partisans!' might turn out the strongest, seeing it represented the armed forces of the country.

But where was the Grand Marshal, who had boasted of his power to restrain the turbulent bands, one of whose most popular leaders he claimed to be? He had gone, disappeared, and was working underhand, so it was reported, to extend the organisation of the confederates, and multiply the rebel groups, which, under the names of *Nexus sacer*, *Nexus pius*, were steadily spreading, and gradually covering the whole country. But, how was his signature at the foot of the *senatus consultum* to be explained? He had only signed a garbled copy, so it seemed, had made a fool of Caillet, and kept the original,—on which his name did not appear,—in his own hands, using the document to swell the rebellion, and increase his own popularity. But what was

the reason of this fresh treachery? His conviction that the Queen's surroundings were unfriendly to himself, and that he could certainly find no place amongst her numerous 'favourites.'

In Poland then, as in France, at the court of Warsaw even as at St. Germain, the defenders of the French cause came simultaneously, though by different roads, to the same conclusion. Peaceful expedients must be abandoned. An appeal must be made to extraordinary methods. Agreement, unfortunately, was to cease, just at the point where execution should have begun. In France, the matter appeared simple enough. An article in the Swedish treaty had provided for what had happened, and had stipulated for the intervention of auxiliary troops, to be employed even against the Polish *confederates*, if these should venture to oppose the election of the Duc d'Anguien. But Marie de Gonzague made an outcry. That meant Civil War! Well, the French King replied, such things happen everywhere, when the inhabitants of a country disagree as to the manner in which they are to be governed, or the quality of the existing government!

But foreign invaders in the country again! The whole population would rise like one man!

And events proved the Queen right. In February 1662, while the Diet, summoned once more, unanimously voted the renewing of the ancient laws against any proposals for anticipatory elections, the leader of the confederated groups published a proclamation, calling on the nobility to defend the Polish frontier against a Franco-Swedish army, which might be expected at Whitsuntide; then, taking the offensive, he opened the campaign, seized Kalisz, Wielun, and Sieradz, threatened Warsaw, and forced the King and Queen to consider the subject of a fresh retreat into Silesia.

So far did he go, that alarm prevailed even at St. Germain, and De Lionne—who had obeyed his master's orders with a sorry grace, had never changed his opinion as to the inopportuneness and danger of the enterprise, and ventured now

to raise his voice a little higher, and vow it was 'time for the King to let his prudence overmaster his generosity'—found his advice received with far more deference than before. In fine, the ratification of the Swedish Treaty was not insisted on, and the Queen of Poland was left to follow her own devices.

Her Italian wit suggested one, early the following year, which would not, perhaps, have occurred to any one in France. Having opened negotiations with the confederates, and drawn their principal leaders to Leopold, under safe-conduct, she summoned the Grand Marshal thither also, and hoped to enclose all the rebels in her net. She intended to begin with Lubomirski. 'She had consulted theologians, to find out whether, if proof existed that a man was stirring up discord and disorder in the army, he could be put to death without observing all the formalities.' Every one had agreed in telling her 'that the thing might be done with a quiet conscience,' and she had matured her plan accordingly. The Grand Marshal was to be arrested with the other rebels,—safe-conducts did not count in the case of such criminals as these—he was to be shut up in a room with a confessor, to be condemned, his confession made, and his head cut off, after which, his accomplices should be more or less severely dealt with. Once the hydra was decapitated its power for evil would be broken.

Everything was prepared for the ambush, the garrison of the town was called to arms, the Hetman's guards carefully posted, but the chief victim slipped through their fingers. The confederates, warned, no doubt, of what was brewing, suddenly manifested an inclination to come to an arrangement. Their proposals had to be discussed, and Lubomirski took advantage of the delay to make himself scarce. The story of this incident is given by Caillet (23rd February 1663, *French Foreign Office Papers*), and the author of the *Fortunes of Sobieski*, who found it in my published selection, is careful to make no reference to that fact.

Marie de Gonzague found herself helpless, and, for the

first time in her life, almost utterly discouraged. The year from one end to the other, was an unlucky one for her. Disaster followed on disaster. In the beginning of the winter she had won over the Field-Hetman of Lithuania, Gonsiewski an active and influential man, by a gift of 18,000 livres, and a promise of 100,000 crowns. Suddenly, he was murdered by some mutinous soldiers. At St. Germain, the King and his boldest counsellors had lost courage even before she did. In October of the preceding year, when the Swedes had sent their ratification of the Treaty, the French Government took advantage of a delay, for which it was itself somewhat responsible, to seek an excuse for actual rupture. Then Caillet was recalled, and the last word anent the 'Great affair' seemed spoken. The play was over.

IV

It was nothing but an entr'acte. The month of October 1663 came at last. The projected marriage between Princess Anne and the Duc d'Anguien had taken place, in spite of everything. And the unanimous vote of the Senate had bestowed the title of 'Only daughter of Their Majesties of the King and Queen of Poland' on the new-made Duchess. Thus a shadowy dynastic bond had been created, and regular relations had been established between the Castle at Chantilly, and the Palace at Warsaw. In this month of October, an unexpected visit was paid to the former place by the Bishop of Gratianopolis, tutor to the children of the Hetman of Lithuania, Sapieha, who came to make a proposal, 'in the name of a great number of Lithuanian and Polish nobles,' for the substitution of Condé himself as candidate for the throne, in the place of the Duc d'Anguien.

At the first blush, the idea seemed to present no attractions. De Lionne, who was consulted, thought it madness, and the principal person interested hastened to disavow it. But by slow degrees it made its way, Marie de Gonzague seemed

well inclined to it, and the news from Poland appeared favourable on the whole. A warlike people could not fail to be flattered at the idea of being ruled, one day, by the victor of Rocroy and Nordlingen. M. Korzon has but a poor opinion, now-a-days, both of these victories and of the man who won them. He was, he holds, a very moderate soldier, inferior to several contemporary Polish leaders. The military critics of that period, even in Poland, had not come to his conclusion. There, the Duc d'Anguien, whom M. Korzon describes as but a sorry fellow, was considered to have inherited his father's courage, at all events, if not his abilities. Lubomirski seemed disposed to recognise the follower of Turenne; if only he might play the part of King-maker, Condé should be King. The more the subject was discussed, the higher rose the ardour and eagerness of the parties concerned. It was resolved, at last, 'to put the irons in the fire again.'

The activity of Marie de Gonzague's correspondence with the dwellers at Chantilly increases, at this period, to an almost feverish extent, and at the same time takes on a peculiar shape and form, quite unrivalled, I believe, in contemporary epistolography. It contains a mixture, common enough at that time, of cypher and cryptogram, but mingled, in this case, with epigrammatic *sous-entendus* of the most piquant description. The Duc d'Anguien, under the pseudonym of *the jealous one*, pursues a *mistress*, who represents the Polish succession, while the *mice*—otherwise the Polish nobles—are said to spend all their talents for nibbling on French gold, so much so, that, to bring them to reason, recourse would seem necessary to *Savagery* ('*la farouche*'), that is to say, to the expedient, borrowed from the hostile camp, of an armed *confederation*.

My readers will gain a clearer idea of this correspondence from the following extracts, which also furnish details of some fresh incidents in the endless drama now re-commencing on a more roomy stage—for, as a diversion against the military revolt, a campaign against the Muscovite had been devised.

This, if victorious, would restore prestige to the Court, and enable it to crown the great enterprise with success. The following lines were penned by Marie de Gonzague :—

WARSAW, 14th Feb. 1664.

'*Saturn* (Canon Woyenski, one of the Grand Marshal's agents) will not, as he thinks, go to *Sappho* (Condé), the *fairy* (Lubomirski) having altered her plans. This, I am persuaded, is a comedy got up between them. He fancies that *Rohan* (the Queen of Poland) will have to apply to them, but they can very well be spared. It is true that he might have smoothed away certain difficulties, which I should have been glad to buy off by gentleness (*sic*), but he is certainly mad as well as spiteful. I am persuaded that in the end, *Clarea* (Lubomirski) seeing that *Rhea* (The King of Poland) is favoured by fortune, that the multitude about him really loves him, and knows the necessity for the *beloved*—(the succession to Poland) will be forced by her own comrades to speak to *C.* (the Queen of Poland). If *Phaeton* (money) is given to *Cæsar* (the Court of Vienna), it will do no service to the *mistress*. *Rhea* is labouring to find means to receive the *jealous one* under the roof of *Valerius* (Poland). For this purpose, the *relations* (Senate) are to be called together. I am in favour of a *Savagery*.'

29th Feb. 1664.

'There are reports of two battles won, the first—a great and important one—by the King, and the other, and lesser, by the army of Lithuania. I am sending five or six couriers, for it is necessary for me to know something about it. The Envoy from *Clethilda* (the Emperor) cannot help showing how little the Peace of Rome pleases him. He cannot avoid seeing that it gives the *Merry one* (Louis XIV.) some liberty to make tender advances to *Valerius*. He fears *Valerius* more than he loves the Queen of Portugal. . . . It seems to me that *Cassiopæia* (Condé) and his friends are not well acquainted with the character of *Valerius*, nor with his noble qualities. I cannot prevent myself, however painful

the avowal may be, from telling you of a proceeding of *Clarea's* (Lubomirski). At the very same time that she sent *Saturn* to visit *Procris* (the Queen of Poland), she also sent to *Huon* (Prince Radziwill), to warn him that I was working hard in favour of the *mistress*, and that he had better be very careful. It was this same *Huon* who caused this pretty story to be told to me. *Deborah* (Morsztyn) acts from time to time, for good and strong reasons. She will end by wearying of these compliments. She is wise, and does nothing ignorantly. *Firesias* (de Lumbres) knows the necessity of giving *Phaeton* to the *mice*.'

4th April 1664.

'The most distressing news I could have heard, is that I cannot inform you that Romodanowski (the Russian General), has been beaten. He has been so cunning that he never would leave his marshy forests. . . . I have learnt that *Rohan* (the Queen of Poland, referring to herself), has sent word to *Rhea* (the King of Poland), not to forsake *Fierabras* (the Army).'

Sometimes less serious subjects are touched upon. Court news is sent from one dwelling to the other. The Queen writes:—

'Our Carnival has not been quite so merry as yours. . . . When I came to Poland, I found a custom for Shrove Tuesday, according to which every one must be dressed the same; the men as peasants, the women as shepherdesses. Nothing could have been less ornamental, the dresses being exceedingly rustic. I arranged the early ones a little, and made them tolerable, although they are nothing but red serge and could not be otherwise. I have been told that the King, my father-in-law, was so fond (of the habit), that at the age of 63 years, he still dressed himself up, having inherited the custom from his grandfathers. I am convinced that if the King could have a Carnival in peace, he would not forget this entertainment. I have seen the late King, my husband, his Chancellor, with his white beard, and the

other great officers, all dressed up in this fashion. At first it struck me as very extravagant.'

It will be noticed that in Poland, the taste for pastoral entertainments came in before the days of Rousseau, or even of D'Urfé.

'I hear wonderful things,' continues Marie de Gonzague, 'of your house at Chantilly. I fear our children will be filled with a great horror of Poland, when they see this country, with its wooden houses.'

The denizens of Chantilly tell the Queen, in return, of the pranks of one of the late Cardinal's nephews, which were amusing all Paris.

'M. Mazarin has driven away his wife, who has taken refuge with Mme. de Bouillon. It is reported that, for some time past, he has taken into his head that he changes his shape; he is persuaded that he has turned into a tulip; he has himself watered, and stands in the sun to make himself blossom.'¹

But the dominant tone in the correspondence is one of gravity, and the end of the year 1664 sees the 'great affair' suddenly pass into a new and still more tragic phase.

v

Lubomirski did not follow *Rhea* to the war. He took advantage of the absence of *Fierabras* to undertake, on his own account, a succession of armaments, which do not appear to have been intended either to overcome Romodanowski, or to support the Condé candidature. On the contrary, he recommenced parleying with the Emperor, entered into fresh intercourse with the Elector of Brandenburg, stirred the popular hostility against 'the French tyranny,' and gave every symptom, in a word, of his intention to checkmate the new plans of the allied Courts.

There must be an end to this man, wrote Marie de

¹ The letters of Condé and the Duc d'Anguien are at Chantilly. Those of Marie de Gonzague are in the National Archives, K. 1314.

Gonzague, more than once, both to St. Germain and to Chantilly.

So we think, came the chorussed answer, but for mercy's sake, let us have no more half measures, and timid skirmishes, and clumsy ambushes. Go straight to the point, look the enemy in the face, and be every whit as bold as he! That man of evil omen is not the only man in Poland. There must be others, able to measure strength with him, and more worthy of your confidence and ours. Czarniecki, for instance, so popular, so glorious. . . .

A man of no importance, without fortune, without adherents! Ah! if only Gonsiewski had not been murdered! Let us try again!

And fresh search was made, until one day, after long hesitation, Marie de Gonzague dropped into the ears of Condé, Louis XIV., and De Lionne, a name, the sound of which they scarcely knew—Sobieski!

There was great discussion of the champion's merits, which seemed more than hypothetical; but this was no time for over-fastidiousness. At all events, it was inquired, was there better warrant for his good faith and fidelity than for the Marshal's?

I answer for him as I would for myself, replied, the Queen; I hold something better than his word, and with him I do not fear the most desperate expedient, even an appeal to arms. War we will have—even hateful civil war, since there is no means of avoiding it. We will defy all traitors within the lists, and beat them too, with Sobieski's aid. I fear no treachery from him; I hold him safe!

Hold him she did, indeed, or was to hold him, within the shortest space. How so? Of that the following chapter shall inform the reader, and with that chapter, too, Marysienka's real life-history begins.

CHAPTER V

MARIE ZAMOYSKA'S LOVE-STORY

- I. The Castle of Zamosc—Marysieńka's weariness—Her pleasures—A dangerous neighbour—The Sobieskis—A hero's education—European tour, and visit to Paris—Legend and history—Physical and moral portrait—Soldier and lover—Idolatry—The idol—Hero and heroine of a unique romance.
- II. The opening—Preliminary skirmish—Virtuous resolutions—Dangerous reading—Self-respect—Stay at Warsaw—*Astrea* and *Celadon*—Love's postillion—The Carmelite Church—A mystic betrothal—Farewell to virtue.
- III. Cryptographic correspondence—Nocturnal meetings—Proposed journey to Paris—Dreams—Settled in France—Marysieńka departs alone—Fresh pleasures and disappointments—Zamoyski displeased—Sobieski remains in Poland—Inhospitability of the French Court—Supplies cut off—No *tabouret* vouchsafed—Virtue reigns once more—The lover transformed into a friend—Return to the conjugal hearth—Fourth quarter of the honeymoon—Sudden eclipse—Suggested divorce—Zamoyski falls sick—Anxiety about the will—Widowed.

I

BOTH at Zamosc and at Zwierzyniec, her lord and master's summer residence, Marysieńka found time heavy on her hands. Yet, as her letters prove,¹ she indulged in numerous and varied pastimes—hunting, riding, fencing, dances and masquerades, not to mention others, at which she leaves us to guess. In these, from an early period, John Sobieski played an important part.

They had already met, as I have said, and the attraction had been mutual. There may even have been an exchange of those vows whereof young people—apparently because

¹ Marysieńka's letters, and Sobieski's, have all been published; those previous to 1665, by M. Kluczycki, in the Collection of the Academy of Sciences at Cracow (1880 and 1881), and the rest by Helcel, in that of the Myszkowski Library (1859).

they think they have plenty of time in which to break them—are apt to be so liberal. But it almost looks as though, on that occasion, Sobieski himself had not been excessively pertinacious. While in Marie de Gonzague's eyes he could not possibly have appeared a suitable husband for her ward, he himself must have been aware of the serious drawbacks attending marriage with a foreigner, whose parents were unknown in the country, whose origin was obscure, whose education was doubtful, whose demeanour was a trifle startling, and whose fortune depended solely on that always uncertain quantity, a sovereign's favour. Thereupon Zamoyski had appeared upon the scene, in all the blaze of his great name, his diamonds, and his pelf, and swiftly extinguished his modest rival's taper. But now the rival had come back. He and Zamoyski were friends and comrades in arms. Their properties did not lie more than ten leagues apart. There was much neighbourly intercourse in the country, and many meetings, too, during Marysienka's frequent visits to Warsaw.

Sobieski was at that time in all the glory of a masculine beauty, which, in later days, was to enthrall the whole of Poland. Tall, muscular, with a figure remarkable—until overwhelmed by premature stoutness—for its fine proportions; features a trifle heavy, betraying the sensual nature of the man, but ennobled by a touch of natural, and to a certain extent hereditary, heroism. 'We came into the world,' he used to say of himself and his brother Mark, '*Fortes ex fortibus*,' and the great warrior, Batory, whose career was cut short by premature death, said of his grandfather, 'If the fate of my crown were to hang on a single combat, I could desire no other champion.'

This near ancestor laid the foundation of a celebrity and fortune which thenceforward steadily increased. The father of John Sobieski was in a position to raise, at his own expense, squadrons of cavalry, the splendour of whose equipment earned them the title of 'Golden Hussars.' On the maternal side, his extraction was yet more illustrious.

The ancestor, in this case, was that Hetman Zolkiewski, who, after a campaign in Muscovy, brought back the Tsar's own person prisoner to Warsaw, and caused King Sigismund's son to be proclaimed in his stead. Later yet, surrounded by the Turks on the Plain of Cecora, he made his cavalry dismount, killed his own horse, and died on his feet, '*Stando, as befits an Emperor.*' Special permission was granted to coin the family plate into money, at the Castle of Zolkiew, for the ransom of his son, who was wounded at his father's side, and the following inscription was chiselled on the hero's tomb:

'Exoriare aliquis nostris ex ossibus ultor.'

This *ultor*—the expected avenger, claimed from Divine justice, the future liberator of Vienna—was born on August 17th, 1629, at Olesko, an eagle's nest in a hollow of the Carpathian Mountains. At the moment of his birth, a thunderstorm burst over the castle, already threatened by a Tartar raid, and so mighty were the salvos of heaven's artillery, which mingled with the yells of the savage invaders to greet his coming, that the hearing of one of the women in charge of the new-born babe was utterly destroyed. The child's education was such as might have been expected in such surroundings. His mother, a Danillowicz, granddaughter of the hero slain at Ceçora, explained the meaning of the family coat of arms—a buckler—to her child, and quoted the Spartan motto, '*Vel cum hoc vel super hoc.*' His elder brother Mark accompanied him, in 1645, on a European tour, such as tradition imposed on all the youthful nobility of the country. The programme of such journeys varied with circumstances. On this occasion, when the marriage of Ladislas with Marie de Gonzague had been just announced, a lengthened stay in France appeared desirable to the young travellers. Their father took alarm, and the minute instructions he thought it right to send them prove the nature of his apprehension.

'As to any intercourse with the people of that country, I warn you as a father, and demand of you *per omnia sacra*, to

be as careful concerning it as if you were handling fire—for the nation is light-minded, unsettled, *plerumque* thoughtless.'

The macaronic style which disfigured Polish literature in the seventeenth and eighteenth century was already in force, in all its native hideousness.

'These Frenchmen will make the merest trifle a question of honour, and will immediately claim their right to die for some trivial cause, and fight a duel. And the worst of it is that all, young and old, are of the same temper. They are marvellous quick at making friends with a man, and just as quick to weary of him.'

Above all things, the young Sobieskis were warned not to play cards, and not to fence with these dangerous foreigners. For the rest, they must submit to the turn of Fortune's wheel which, for the moment, gave this 'inconsistent and thoughtless' nation an undoubted supremacy in Christendom. The French language would oust the Italian, and it must be admitted that even in Latin the French were *primas partes in stilo*. For this reason the young men were desired to take lessons in rhetoric while on the banks of the Seine. As to the arts, there cultivated with no less success, the travellers were left to follow their own fancy. Dancing? yes, perhaps—for the sake of finding favour with the future Queen. But the father would rather see them dancing seriously, with Turks and Tartars! Music? yes, again—if that sort of nonsense gave them pleasure. But they would have money enough, thank God, to pay their own musicians.

The visit of Mark and John Sobieski to Paris lasted from June 1646 to May 1647. What an opportunity here for the author of this book to outdo M. de Salvandy! Think of John Sobieski in Mme. de Longueville's salon, holding forth with Bassompierre, Gondi, Mme. de Sévigné herself! Or John Sobieski, again, as one of the King's musketeers, taking lessons from the great Condé! What a succession of delightful pictures rises before our eyes! But my pleasure, and that of my readers, has been crossed by an unfortunate

and all too exact comparison of dates. These dates are the merciless and undying enemies of legendary history. In 1646, Mme. de Longueville had left Paris to join her husband at Münster; Sobieski was only seventeen, and did not know one word of French! And then a document—cruel destroyers these, of the picturesque in history!—lies before me, as I write—the travelling journal of a gentleman in the young men's suite.¹ Sadly detailed and commonplace it is. It notes the inevitable visits to public monuments: a pilgrimage to the Bois de Vincennes (the poor wretch writes *bon de Vinsan*, and his editor corrects this into *bonde de vincent*!), where the future King, John Casimir, was imprisoned; riding lessons taken from a Frenchman, and fencing lessons from an Italian; a hasty appearance, as mere spectators, at a royal hunting-party in the forest of St. Germain, and there it ends. No adventure of any kind, save a sword-thrust received, not by either pupil, but by their tutor, who had ventured himself into a house of evil repute. And besides all this, Mark and John were in mourning. A month after their arrival in Paris, they received the double news of their father's promotion to the Castellanship of Cracow—an honorary dignity, but the highest in the realm—and of his death, caused by an attack of apoplexy, the result of a stormy discussion with King Ladislas. He had opposed that monarch's warlike projects, from which his old age and his paternal fondness shrank in alarm, and had been called a *parvenu* for his pains.

Returned to Poland, Mark soon wiped out, with his own blood, the stain left by this sad incident on the family shield. He made his first appearance in the warlike dance his father had desired for him, and fell, sword in hand, in a skirmish with the Tartar allies of the rebel Cossacks (1652). John thus found himself sole heir to a vindicated name, and to a fortune which the extinction of certain charges was soon to render considerable. A few more years rolled by, spent

¹ Published, together with the elder Sobieski's instructions, in M. Kłaczynski's Collection.

in a hurried and feverish existence—short spells of pleasure, long stretches of hardship, war, Crimean captivity, a journey to Constantinople on diplomatic business—until, just as he neared his thirtieth year, he met the woman sent by fate and Providence, the woman without whom, so far as we can see, he might have remained, even as his ancestors, a brave-hearted destroyer of the infidel on the plains of the Ukraine, and, within the lists of domestic anarchy in his own country, one carper the more, railing against the sovereign power, another grave-digger, hollowing out the tomb of future generations.

Even nowadays, some Poles curse and lament this meeting. They do wrong. The two were born for each other, as this book, I think, will prove. Each completed what the other lacked: their qualities and faults unequal, dissimilar, but yet agreeing, their moral affinity self-evident. He, of the sanguine, sun-bred type, inclined to indolence and sybaritic ease. His whole descent was redolent of Little Russia and the Southern soil. As a child he suffered from fits of nose-bleeding, which alarmed his parents. As a youth he drove his mother to distraction by a series of freaks, love adventures, and duels; and this to such a point, that after having passionately adored him, she ended by parting from him, and hiding her sorrows in Italy. As a grown man he was subject to fits of rage, and furies, and swift transports, followed by no less sudden collapse. On the battlefield he had all the quick grasp and resolution and brilliant valour of the double line of heroes from whom he descended. At the Council Board, he was ever vacillating, and easily swayed. Good-natured and cunning, simple yet wily, he was a thorough Slav, with that mixture of qualities so frequently seen amongst his compatriots. Though far from devout, he preserved a somewhat vulgar faith, largely tinged with superstition: believed in dreams and omens; fancied he saw a black dog run across the front of his army on a day of defeat, and on the morrow, when victory crowned his efforts, thought he espied a white eagle sailing above his banners.

He was convinced the Grand Vizier used spells to withstand him, and cast about for means to conjure them. When his wife was brought to bed on All Souls' Day, he ascribed her safe delivery to the intervention of the souls his alms had taken out of Purgatory. In spite of his roughness of demeanour and boorish habits, and of a conversation unpolished even to coarseness, frequently expressing, in his native language, things that should have been veiled in an idiom less familiar to his hearers, the natural imagination of the man was epic, sublime in feeling, and occasionally even in expression. At times he was actually poetic, after his own fashion. At the capture of Gran (the Latin *Strigonium*), a Hungarian town over which the Crescent and the Cross had battled for centuries, he was heard to say, 'If I were to crush this handful of earth, it would drip blood.'

Yet there was nothing of the dreamer or the idealist about him. His conception of life was most positive, most practical, most commonplace. He had some ambition, but almost as much rapacity. Greed of glory and greed of money marched abreast in the scheme of his anxieties, and often clashed. In love matters his nature was peculiarly well balanced—set between heaven and earth, between the very highest form of sentimentality and an almost cynical eroticism. And further, his was one of those organisations—so extraordinarily rare even in the weaker sex—in which love is a gift only once bestowed, exclusive and irrevocable. In 1683, when he was fifty-four years old, and after twenty years of marriage, the first letter he wrote, on his road to Vienna and immortality, was to tell his wife that his night had been a bad one, 'as it always was when he had to sleep away from her,' and he closes his letter by 'pressing a million kisses on all the beauties of an adored and most adorable little body.'

To him she always remained the idol of his unending worship and perpetual adoration. I do not pretend to assert that this devotion to one object, so contrary to the ordinary masculine temperament, was never disturbed by

any other inclination; but such incidents were, I am absolutely convinced, quite accidental, exceedingly rare, and very unimportant.

As for the idol in question, I have already sketched her personal aspect, and given some hint, as I imagine, of the rest. She was imperious, eager, and capricious. These were all family traits. Mme. de Sévigné speaks of her sister, who was married to the Marquis de Béthune, as 'a poor creature, a constant prey to the liveliest passions.' The Marquise, who really loved her husband, was violent in her tenderness and fierce in her jealousies. 'The furies entered Poland in her train.' She caught her husband, once, in an act of flagrant infidelity, and instantly took summary and most unsavoury vengeance on the offender. The Abbé de Choisy is responsible for the anecdote, which is hardly fit for English readers. 'I have the heart of a lion,' Marysienka would say of herself, and her husband added the following qualification: 'When you choose, you are the kindest creature in the world, but, like the hay, you need fine weather, and if by chance we set ourselves against a thing, or set our hearts upon it, nothing will make us budge!' This obstinacy was shown concerning many things, some of them very trivial. But her stiff-neckedness occasionally did admirable service in her heroic soldier's cause. In that association of interests which, in her case and Sobieski's, completed their heart union, and preceded their actual marriage, she represented the will-power,—often hardly realising the object to be attained, but resolute always, strong, tenacious. She was the spring, and he, in many, and some very solemn, circumstances, was nothing but the trigger.

You ask me whether she was romantic? I answer, yes! as was only proper in the case of an assiduous reader of the works of Honoré d'Urfé and Mlle. de Scudéry. But romantic after a cold fashion, never for an instant seeming to take quite seriously, or even to comprehend, the amorous metaphysics into which she plunges with her *Sylvander* or her *Celadon*. A coquette?—oh, yes! a deliberate coquette,

redoubtable and skilful. She had been brought up to be charming. At a very early period of her life she had realised that her gifts, natural and acquired, in this direction were the only resource she possessed. At the age of thirteen her education in the matter was complete, and her apprenticeship begun. When Sobieski made his first appearance in her circle, he found a rival in every other man about the Court. No one escaped her. Twenty years later, Michael Wisniowiecki, King John Casimir's successor, who had quarrelled with Sobieski, was seen scanning a gathering of ladies, as if in search of some particular person. Presently he began inquiring after Marysieńka, and was told she was in Paris.

'All the worse for me. If she had been here she would have reconciled me with her husband.'

'Your Majesty has a very pleasant recollection, then, of that French lady?'

'I have indeed. I was desperately in love with her.'

Historically speaking, nevertheless, and apart from a few trifling incidents, also of slight importance, and in which politics would seem to have played a far more influential part than any inclination, whether of the senses or the heart, Marysieńka, too, remains with us as the heroine of a unique love-story. The phenomenon is easily explained. Neither sensual nor sentimental in her own person, compact, indeed, of nerves and imagination, she had the good fortune to pitch, at the very outset, upon a man who completely satisfied her physical and moral temperament. Her romance was as full of variety as she could wish, her lover as docile as she could desire. She took every pains to complicate the first and torment the second; and out of it all arose an adventure, unique, also, in its way, which I shall now endeavour to describe.

II

Ten leagues, in a country where, even at the present day, horses outstrip the railway engine, are nothing, more espe-

cially when a love-affair enters into the question. Sobieski was a constant guest at Zamosc, and during his absences, his letters were not less frequent. There was no lack of pretext for correspondence. Gazettes and news from France, to be sent his fair hostess, books lent, and commissions executed in Warsaw and elsewhere. In 1659, two years after Marysieńska's first marriage, her country neighbour was already admitted to an intimacy tolerated, even in Poland, by the easy morals of that period. He was the *patito*, the *factotum*. He chose stuffs, saw to the setting of jewels, attended even to the pecuniary affairs of the fair Palatine, and grew so familiar with the interior of her house as to know the exact distance between the chamber of its mistress and any other room in the mansion.

We cannot find a trace, as yet, of any love between them. This romance, marked by no opening thunderclap, ran, for a considerable period, in quiet byways. There was even talk, about this period, of a marriage for the *Starost* of Jaworów (the title now borne by Sobieski), and a letter from the lady runs as follows: 'My advice is that it should take place as soon as possible; we should rejoice in the presence of so fair a neighbour.'

Yet, beneath the compliment, may we not guess at an understanding, a symptom of the opening skirmish? For the same letter expresses the writer's 'grief' at not being able to be present at the intended wedding. And there is an extraordinary fulness of information as to the life and occupations of the favourite neighbour. News has come that his castle at Jaworów has been burned down, and with it certain 'baths' which sheltered some youthful beauties, victims of a Tartar invasion of the Ukraine, of whom the young *Starost* has constituted himself protector. 'No small reputation this,' pursues the writer, 'but take care that no one sings to you once more:

"Czy ia toby ne mowila;
Ne bery Woloszki?"

'Have I not told you to beware of the Wallachian?' The

reputation of the Moldo-Wallachian women for beauty, though great, was saddled, in contemporary estimation, with certain equivocal qualities.

In another year, mutual confidence had reached such a pitch, that one of Sobieski's pages, bearing a parcel of letters addressed to his master, and failing to find him at Warsaw, committed it without ceremony to the hands of Marie Zamoyska, who opened the packet, read the letters, and burned them! Were they lovers already? I think not. There are too many signs of merriment and frivolous gaiety in Marysieńka's correspondence during her future lover's absences, for this to have been the case. There is not a symptom of regret, not an appearance—nor even a pretence—of weariness, or of impatience. On the contrary, she seems in a peculiarly good humour: taking her pleasure, riding on horseback every day, fencing in the Spanish style, and sighing to fight a duel, ordering masks from Venice for the coming carnival, and inquiring for 'the little lute-player' who has been promised her. She tells how her husband has given her leave to dress her head 'in the French style, with nothing but her hair,' and describes a jacket of her own invention, buttoned crossways, Tartar fashion, 'which becomes her admirably.' She does indeed complain of the rarity of letters from her absent friend, but only because she is impatient for news of the Queen, 'her good mistress,' and quite understands 'his being as negligent with her as with other people.' Is he not, indeed, the very personification of carelessness and thoughtlessness? Has he not even lost a portrait she herself had bestowed on him? She is glad of it, she vows, although she had intended to send it 'to a person who had a better right to it.' As the blunderer in question is just starting for the war, she consents to replace the object he has been guilty of losing. But her concealments on the subject are something wonderful.

'I send you a scapular and a cross, within which there is a precious relic; so that if you are killed the mark of the Christian may be found upon you. You are not to despise

it—not because it comes from me, but because of the relic which it touches; for do not think I hereby do you any favour, although you know, and I too, that you neither claim any favour from me, nor can claim it, but this is a thing which I would do for any person.'

'You know, and I too!' she affirms. But the remainder of the letter, unluckily, gives these words the lie. No agreement, it is clear enough, had as yet been reached, as to the limit of his just pretensions and her promised concessions; but the decisive engagement had begun.

'I am sorry, nevertheless, that you should ask me, in your last letter, for a thing that I cannot grant you without doing myself offence, and, if you yourself consider it in all justice, you will acknowledge that you do me wrong. I beseech you, therefore, make me no more of these requests, which I cannot grant you, and which it grieves me to refuse you. I treat you in a manner like my own child, by giving you this scapular which I love. Farewell! let us live content, within the bounds of virtue.'

No woman, as a rule, would make such resolutions, and above all put them into words, without having first suffered herself to be led to the very edge of the precipice over which she refuses to leap. And when to this fact is added the fiction of maternal tenderness bestowed by a young woman just twenty (this letter is dated 1660) on a young man of thirty summers, all hope of maintaining the balance would seem desperate. Yet certain women seem to make this perilous threshold the favourite spot for their most valiant resistance, and to this category Marie Zamoyska appears to have belonged. 'The child' she thus recalled to his respect for outraged virtue, did not, we may well conceive, remain contentedly within the austere limits which were to have confined his longings and his hopes. He struggled after the usual fashion, and with all the gestures hallowed by tradition—despair, rage, threats of rupture, and the invariable request for the restitution of all letters addressed to the treacherous and heartless beauty.

All that he gained, at first, was another missive from Marysienka, dated a month later than her last :—

‘MY DEAR CHILD,—I should have been still more beholden to you if you had remained yet longer without sending me news of yourself, and whether you had received what I sent back to you, which caused me sore grief. However, since I have accepted you as my son, I will take the same care of you, on condition that you will not take too much advantage, and that my bringing up of such a child as you shall work me no dishonour. But to tell you the truth, I fear me you are too debauched, and that I shall be blamed for that I did not whip you enough when you were small. However, if you love me, you should think of comforting me in my old age by taking a wife. But I am losing hope, and believe that all your life you will be a *nic dobrego* (good-for-nothing). I have been to Sokal (a famous place of pilgrimage), and I have prayed to the Virgin to amend you. I doubt my prayers will not be answered.

‘But I will speak seriously. You send word to a certain person that you are melancholy for a certain reason. It is time to cease playing. I acknowledge I have done wrong by doing so in the past. Believe me, and do not despair, if it is for the reason which I imagine. Provided you will promise me to love the person whom you know of, with a pure and innocent affection, I swear to write to her and send you news of her, and to make you know how closely your contentment touches me, I will, to oblige you, make good our broken friendship.

‘As to all those things which are yours, I will keep them till our next interview. Have no fear concerning them. I will return all to you in good order. I hope you will do the like for me ; I will keep back nothing which belongs to you.’

Thus the scene of the return of the love-tokens—classic before Molière’s time—was again to be enacted. But matters never went so far. And, to begin with, had these friends really quarrelled to such an extent as to render it

necessary to re-cement a broken friendship? The habitual rule, in all Marysieńka's letters, is that the beginning should be utterly contradicted by the close. And this time, again, just below the lines reproduced above, I find the following :

'We have just received news, which we are sending on to you. "Preserves" are my only pleasure at this moment. I have time to make a few for your journey. I send you the most wholesome I have made at this present, for you to taste. They are dried walnuts. As for all those in *sok* (syrup), some one must have cast the evil eye upon them. They are all turning sour. Send me back my book of songs. I send you the first part of *Cyrus*; when you have read it, send for the others. I am also beginning to read *Cléopâtre*, which you commended to me so highly. I have nothing more to tell you ; only I desire you will take care of yourself, and send me word if there is plenty of merchandise.'

Certain passages at the close of this letter are incomprehensible, and prove the writer's habit of indulging in a cryptographic style, necessitating the constant use of a key. From the little we know of this key, with which we shall shortly make more ample acquaintance, we gather that the word 'preserves' stood for 'letters.' Marysieńka wrote many at this juncture, and Sobieski was the constant confidant of all the hidden secrets of her correspondence. Speaking generally, this particular moment in the young beauty's unstable existence and changeable temper was coincident with a complete alteration of her tastes and occupations. There was no more riding on horseback, no more fencing, no more masquerading. She was reading a great deal, and has just given us a glimpse of the subjects of her study. It is difficult for us, in these days, to realise the effect produced by the works of La Calprenède and Scudéry on the imagination of persons living in those, nor to conceive that what to us seems the height of insipidity should have struck them as being full of charm, and taste, and intoxicating qualities.

They did intoxicate Marysieńka, and, within a very few weeks, the actors in the love-story would seem to have exchanged their parts. All the vexation, and passionate reproaches, and tender anxiety, are now on the other side.

'I wish you a happy journey,' writes the lady of Zamosc, 'and pray you may come back more sincere than when you departed, for I cannot help but tell you that I have discovered matters touching the Vice-Chancellor's widow to be quite different from what you described to me. And this I know, indeed, from the persons you have employed, who are by no means small ones.'

This Vice-Chancellor's widow was the identical 'lovely neighbour' whose advent Marie Zamoyska had declared herself so happy to welcome. As regards the discovery just made concerning her, we learn the nature of her displeasure from quite a different source. This letter of hers is dated 1st September 1660, and just about the same time, Caillet, who had been sent, as we have already seen, on a mission to Warsaw, wrote as follows to the Lord of Chantilly:—

'The Queen has told me that M. Sobieski, Crown Standard-Bearer of this kingdom' (this office had just been conferred upon him), 'who is young, rich, and well born, greatly desires to marry some French lady related to your Highness. She asked me whether I knew any such, and added that it mattered little whether she was handsome or well dowered. I replied that I thought M. de Vallançay had daughters. She answered that if this were so, it would be necessary to send a portrait here as quickly as possible.'

The Marquise de Vallançay was a Montmorency—own sister to the great Condé's mother. The Prince took the liveliest interest in the plan. One Mlle. de Vallançay was left, living in a convent at Moulins. Her picture was painted in hot haste; but a second letter from Caillet threw cold water on hopes which were already flaring high. M. Sobieski, he affirmed, was indeed a splendid *parti*, with at least one hundred thousand livres a year, but he was said to have lately fallen in love with the sister of Prince

Michael Radziwill, widow of Vice-Chancellor Leszczynski. Further correspondence ensued, fresh inquiries were made, and so Marysienka got wind of the intrigue. The picture, indeed, was sent, and she, very probably, was aware of the fact.

It came too late, though the fair widow had nothing to do with this result. That meeting of the Diet—called together at Warsaw in April 1661—which proved so fatal, as my readers will recollect, to the progress of the 'great affair,' had hurried on the inevitable *dénouement* of the Zamoyska-Sobieski romance. During the sittings, *mother* and *child* had met, and Marysienka, under the united influence of her study of *Cleopatre* and the sting of her own wounded vanity, soon cast away all pretence at maternal severity. She herself became *Astrea*, and permitted her beloved son to play the part of *Celadon*. There was an exchange of letters, in which no question of virtue was discussed, meetings were arranged, for the purposes of which an obliging gentleman of the name of Korycki rode *postillon d'amour*, and irreverent references were made to the *Flute* (a name used to represent Zamoyski, the Polish equivalent of which, *fuiara*, also signified *booby*).

There can be no possible doubt that those few months in the capital removed every cause for sorrow on Sobieski's part. If in former times, and out of hopeless despair, he had ever dreamt of other conquests, all that was over. He was conquered himself now; conquered for ever. Marysienka, it must be said, was careful to take her own precautions. There is no doubt that the first chapter of the book which was to have so many, was broken off by her in somewhat hasty fashion, and her reason for so doing was thoroughly characteristic of the woman. Hearing that one of the boon companions whom the husband she had left behind her loved to gather round him, was on the brink of extorting a sum of nine thousand livres from his patron, she, unable to endure the thought, left her *Celadon* open-mouthed in the middle of a fond duet, and hurried to Zamosc to try

and prevent the misfortune. But, on St. John's Day, before departing, she led her lover to the Carmelite Church, and there, before the altar, received fresh vows, which, as she fondly hoped, her bold soldier's simple piety would render sacred in his eyes. She swore others of her own, no doubt. But what could she promise, save what she had already performed, or what her first confession had given her lover a right to take for granted?

In a woman's case, each love-affair is always her last, unless it be her first. Perhaps, and probably even, the fact of her possible freedom had occurred to both. Zamoyski, at his present rate, was losing more than his money—every day his health grew weaker and weaker. There was even a mystic betrothal ceremony before the altar. I referred, some pages back, to a ring that suddenly appeared on Sobieski's finger—that ring was carried away from the Carmelite Church.

Then the lovers parted.

III

But their letters grew more and more frequent. Letters of quite a different nature, Marysienka's especially, full of a decision, an affectionate resolution, astonishing in a woman of her age. She scolds him still—she always will scold him—but her motives are quite different. She still gives orders imperiously, almost passionately, but there is no more talk of wisdom and prudence.

'At this moment I greatly desire that you should pass through *Szczebrzeszyn*; you will ask for *the Cassia's* horses, at the *Monk's House*, and from there you will come across the park in the evening . . . you must not stop, nor send any message to the *Flute*; if he should find fault, you can say that you feared being a pest. . . .

'You will not amuse yourself anywhere, if you desire I shall believe you punctual in that which I desire of you—which, after all, is only to enjoy as quickly as possible the

presence of *Celadon*, without whom *Astrea* cannot be happy. Believe this, and show more diligence !'

And in another letter: 'My daughter says you are too neglectful, and that it is clear your love began in the bitter cold.'

And again: 'Sir! I think it a strange thing that you should expect folk to write to you, while you are diverting yourself. You are mistaken if you think they are bound to be your gazettes. I am weary of writing to you, and, I give you notice that, wherever I may be, I shall be silent in future, having once told you that my house is not a *Carczema* (*Karczma*, inn) whither you can come to spend an hour.'

She still goes on giving him commissions, desiring him, amongst other things, to order a ring, which is to have 'two little hearts burning in the same flame, enamelled within it.'

So, what with duties of her imposing and those of his hard life as a soldier, which he continues to perform (for she slanders him—perhaps she knows it—when she talks of his *diversions*); what with his necessary journeys to the camp, and his no less indispensable journeys to her house, Sobieski is so constantly on the move, that he is unable to attend his mother's deathbed. She dies at the close of the year, which had been so eventful for him. Is he to be allowed, at all events, to go and bury her? Yes, but he must be quick about it.

'Make haste to get you home for this funeral, for fear we should lose any opportunity of seeing one another!'

Was she then really in love, and hungering for his presence? I would fain believe it! But at this very moment I find her deeply pre-occupied, and quarrelling with her husband, over an object which has nothing in common with her desire not to be parted from *Celadon*. Far from it: the subject of discussion is a journey to Paris. She desires that *M. le Prince* should accompany her. He refuses. At all events she would have him permit her to start in time to

spend the Carnival in Paris. Once more he refuses, and the quarrel rages afresh.

And, truth to tell, there was something suspicious about the proposed journey. Sobieski was shortly to begin playing the part of the Man sent by Providence to Marie de Gonzague. Already she was courting and flattering him. Her eye had fallen on the ring. When she became aware of Marysieńka's travelling plans, she dropped the lover a hint that he himself might shortly be despatched to France. The Dauphin's birth should be the pretext, and his complimentary mission supplemented by another of a more important character. Thereupon the imagination of the young couple had begun to work. Not only would they find themselves in peace and freedom near the *Enchanted Palace* (thus St. Germain was described), but, thanks to the 'great affair,' they might find means of remaining there together, and for good. Such services as Sobieski was about to render to the French cause might well earn him an *establishment* in Marysieńka's native country. They began to count on the munificence of the *Grand Roi*. Marie Zamoyska bethought herself that the Polish climate was 'killing her,' and Sobieski talked of buying a house in Paris.

But these were all dreams, and in the spring of the following year the lady's departure became a cruel reality. *Celadon* remained behind in Poland. She left him, at all events, an unequivocal, though perhaps too demonstrative, proof of her feelings, by confiding to him, during the time of her absence, the administration of all the property she owed to her husband's liberality, quite to the exclusion of Zamoyski. And she did not fail to supply her absent friend with 'preserves' as affectionate, as fault-finding, and as worrying as those of former times. But this did not prevent her applying her whole mind to making the best possible use of her stay in Paris, both as regarded interest and amusement.

Her husband placed some difficulties in her way, and he may well be excused. According to the story current in

the district, Marysieńka had left Zamosc not only against his will, but without his knowledge, and had carried off every halfpenny she could find within the castle, to the tune, it was alleged, of seventy thousand florins. The story circulated on this subject was probably somewhat exaggerated, but it contained a certain amount of truth, and there was some reason for legitimate displeasure on the part of the Palatine of Sandomir. Of the three children his wife had borne him, only one remained—a daughter, sickly and puny as the rest. Marysieńka had not dreamt of burdening herself with the poor child, and she had been left to the tender mercies of paid service. This grievance alone sufficed, and Zamoyski determined to turn it to account by laying hands on the revenues left in his rival's care. He even went so far as to confiscate his absent lady's 'wearing apparel.' This did not prevent her from having 'a very fine coach, two pages, four lacqueys, and beautiful liveries' in Paris, and 'in her room, hung with high-warp tapestries, a crimson damask bed, with the most beautiful fringes ever seen.' The only other thing she could wish for was a 'velvet bed' for the summer, for, she remarks, 'damask is only used in spring and autumn.'

She had another longing, a *tabouret* at Court. This, for a long time, was her chief anxiety and her heaviest grief. She had not been thought so 'villainous-looking' as she had feared by the frequenters of the *Enchanted Palace*. Her figure, which had been her chief subject of anxiety, had been 'considered quite handsome' by the best judges. In a word, she clearly saw she would pass muster, and further, she was taking pains about the necessary finishing touches;—had a dancing-master 'who taught the Queen,' and who, after a few lessons, declared his new pupil was 'going about it very fairly,' and was taking singing and guitar lessons besides. The idea of 'passing' without a *tabouret* was one, she vowed, that could not be entertained by the wife of a *Prince Zamoyski*. But truly it was the business of her 'good mistress' (occasionally the cyphered correspondence

bestows less affectionate titles on the Queen) to ask this favour for her. The Queen of England did it almost every day for Englishwomen 'who were nothing more.'

Marie de Gonzaguè struggled for a while, was dubbed a *weathercock* and a *chameleon* in the 'preserves' despatched to Sobieski, and ended by yielding in handsome—perhaps in somewhat treacherous—fashion, and claiming the rank of Duchess for her *protégée*. Instantly the combined coats of the Zamoyskis and the D'Arquiens on the panels of the coach which bore the impatient Princess, were adorned with a ducal mantle. But the *tabouret* came not. The Protocol, as unyielding then as now, refused to admit the Polish Queen's right to make French duchesses of ladies whose husbands were not even *bona fide* princes in Poland. And of a sudden, everything began to go wrong with Marysieńka. A carefully planned meeting with the Queen Marie Thérèse, which was to have taken place on neutral ground, previous to the hoped-for presentation, turned out a lamentable failure. Her Majesty, after having expressed a wish to meet the would-be duchess at the Capuchin Convent at St. Germain, failed to keep her appointment. What was the reason? The King had been carrying on an intrigue with Mlle. de la Motte-Houdancourt, and this had roused the Queen's fury against her maids-of-honour, one of whom happened to be a sister of Marysieńka's. At the same time, all the more general objects and plans connected with the Paris journey fell to the ground. If great hopes had been built, in Poland, on her diplomatic powers and political relations, the disappointment must have been bitter. In both matters her failure was complete. It must be acknowledged that the Polish Court had received some warning in this respect, as early as 1661. Marysieńka had boasted loudly of a correspondence she had opened with M. de Lionne, in which she had appealed to the connection between her family and his. 'That,' writes Caillet, at the foot of the letter, 'is a bid for your acknowledgment of your relationship with her.' The acknowledgment never came, and in vain

Caillet protested, 'I do not know why you treat one of the loveliest Palatines in this country so cruelly. If you had seen her, you would handle her in very different fashion.' Caillet, too, was falling in love, and was just on the brink of an adventure of which the diplomatic correspondence of that period still bears traces. But even after he had beheld the fair lady in person, M. de Lionne continued cruel. Apart from the official world, Marysieńka was received by the Princess Palatine, but she was fain to be satisfied with the admiration, touched with envy, roused by the sight of her house at Asnières. She paid her duty to the Duchesse d'Anguën, whom she thought 'boastful and silly.' And that was all the information she sent home.

Meanwhile the news from Poland was growing worse. Sobieski, far from dreaming of joining his *Astrea*, was making ready to follow the King on his proposed campaign against the Muscovites. Duty and honour must come first. *Astrea* protested vehemently, but so stern was his reply that she did not venture to persist. On the other hand, Zamoyski showed signs of an absolute resolve to enforce his wife's return to the conjugal hearth. He cut off all supplies. Matters grew serious. Amongst the pleasures which, in spite of all her disappointments, had made Marysieńka's stay in Paris sweet to her, had been the fancy that she was laying the foundations of the *establishment* dreamt of by *Celadon*. She had inspected many houses, discussed prices, and contrived internal arrangements. She had even ventured on an attempt to obtain letters of naturalisation for the would-be purchaser. She had gone so far as to nurse that other dream—of life spent together on the banks of the Seine—and had actually prepared the way for its realisation in her own family circle. *Celadon* must write to M. d'Arquien; she wished him to express 'his desire to know him, and to gain his affection,' to speak to him with all respect 'of the passion he had felt for his daughter ever since he had known her, and of the desire he had to be yet nearer to her.'

All these hopes were blown away, now, like smoke. There

was no doubt about the fact that *Celadon* was not coming to Paris, and that *Astrea* was in danger of dying there of starvation.

She fretted, bewailed herself, fell sick 'of melancholy,' as she was assured by three princes of science—M. Guénaud (she writes it *Guenos*), chief physician to the Queen-mother, M. Esprit, first physician to Monsieur, and M. Dupuis, first physician to the Princess Palatine—who were all summoned to her bedside. Then she resigned herself to circumstances, and Sobieski, to his no small surprise, received, under her own hand, the 'acknowledgment' of the love she had never ceased to cherish for her legitimate spouse. Yes, indeed! she loved him, and '*l'animait, autant qu'une honnête femme le doit.*'

I leave my readers to satisfy themselves as to the absolute meaning of the sentence, the spelling of which, '*iadvoue l'aimer et la ny may,*' leaves it somewhat doubtful. And, she went on, if he would only send away the servants who sponged upon him and gave him such bad advice, she would very gladly return to him, and live with him at Zwieryniec.

It was some time before she put these new and unexpected inclinations and resolutions into action. But she made her preparations in the most remarkably consistent spirit. While the 'preserves' she despatched to her *Celadon* grew more and more sweet and affectionate, she laid increasing stress on the virtuous part she was resolved to play. She may have been sincere—women have such a talent for forgetting! There was an end to her jealous suspicions and fault-finding; it was poor Sobieski, now, who was to fret and eat his heart out, in his distant camp, whenever the Tartars, the Cossacks, the Muscovites, and Lubomirski, whose rival he was fast becoming, left him time to do it. It was the forsaken lover's turn to feel the sting of anxiety—'those Frenchmen are all so attractive! the very air they breathe is full of seduction!' She re-assures him, suggesting all the while a fresh conception of the tender bonds which she does not desire to break, but which she would fain bring back, by

insensible degrees, within those virtuous limits from which we cannot but think we have noticed their escape. If 'the preserved oranges' strike him as being 'so dried up' (*i.e.* if the expression of her love, in *Astrea's* letters, has undergone a change), this is only because she dreads the uncertainties of the post. He must believe that she will preserve them for him 'as whole and fine as may be, *in her present state*, and that she will never be a traitor to him.' Let him not say 'if that had not been made'—meaning the oath—for 'she would do it again a hundred times over,' and 'although the climate is delightful, she will always be true to those to whom she owes truth.' She has been no traitor to him, in the most cruel climate, so long as his behaviour and actions have been what they should. If he will but continue to do his duty, she will never change, 'nevertheless, without failing in her own.'

Thus the great word was spoken, and the attempt made to reconcile the *friend*—for the lover is fading gradually out of sight—with the outraged husband. Zamoyski had not, in fact, remained in ignorance of his past misfortune. All Poland, indeed, was talking of it. Every day some one announced Sobieski's departure for Paris, and his own family putting a finger in the pie, the uproar had grown tremendous, and the scandal public. This must be remedied before return was possible. And with an easy-going being like her husband, such an attempt did not strike Marysieńka as impossible.

'I should have greatly wished that *Beaulieu* (the name of one of Marie de Gonzague's maids-of-honour, another cryptonym for Sobieski) might have made an effort to see the *Flute*, and as he is a good-natured person, have reproached him, either through the Bishop of Warsaw or some close friend, with nursing somewhat in his heart against her, and that—being her friend to such a point as he has always professed—he has not opened his heart to her, for then he would have seen that if any stories had been told against her, they were the work of impostors . . . after

which it will be well, when the nosegay has been transplanted (*i.e.* when Marysieńka has returned to Poland), to carry out the proposed plan, for unless that is done, and there is friendship with the *great fountain* (another designation for Zamoyska), there can be no mingling of the *essences* (the lady herself) with the *powder* (Sobieski), nor any playing at dice.'

What Marysieńka meant by 'playing at dice' is not absolutely clear. This letter, dated 20th July 1662, is the last she wrote from Paris, whither she had returned after a stay of some months in the Nivernais, and where she had not failed to make a fresh attempt to attain the objects of her early ambitions. These efforts resulted in her appearing at Vincennes, where 'M. le Grand Maître régalaît la Reine and M. Frère du Roy.' There was a hunt, a fight 'between several wild beasts, such as lions, leopards, bears, wild bulls, and great dogs,' a comedy, and a ball. But not the shadow of a *tabouret*, and not even a glance from His Majesty. 'He kept himself apart with his *Dianne*.' Zamoyski meanwhile remained inflexible, and Sobieski cast off his bonds to such an extent as to contract an intimacy with their Polish majesties, which Marysieńka, not being a third party to the arrangement, at once concluded to be dangerous in its nature. Did he not actually venture to propose entertaining the *Apothecary* and the *Chameleon* (the King and Queen) in his lately restored mansion at Jaworów? Such an expense was quite unnecessary, and he was ordered to 'avoid it and every other expenditure completely.'

To be brief, the hour of departure had struck, and after having declared herself 'born to misery,' wept many tears, and dried those of her father, her mother and her sisters, *Astrea* started on her homeward journey.

It was soon *Celadon's* turn to be plunged in melancholy, for the *Flute*, once he had recovered his own, showed signs of his intention to guard it better than in the past. Marie Zamoyska had succeeded—how, we have not discovered—

in deceiving her lord as to her past conduct, or else in inducing him to overlook it. Zamoyski gave public proof of his return to friendly conjugal relations by conducting his wife back in great pomp from the Park (his summer residence at Zwierzyniec) to Zamosc. The returning traveller was solemnly received in the church, and the Zamosc Academy, which was one of the glories of the town, did her homage with tributary compliments, in prose and verse. One of Marie Zamoyska's brothers, the Chevalier d'Arquien, who had travelled with her from France, shared these honours with her. But the hoped-for reconciliation with the friend she now declared so unjustly suspected, came to nothing. There was no 'dice-playing,' and the 'preserves' themselves grew sparse and cautious. The utmost she ventured on was some enigmatic postscript, in which a sister, or a friend, desired the writer to send news of her to Sobieski, and assure him of her 'unwavering constancy.' Sometimes presents accompanied these messages—as, for instance, a portrait, which, though it represented a young and pretty woman, was to pass as a reproduction of the features of M. d'Arquien, and a 'flame-coloured sash' intended for the beloved *Beaulieu*. But Sobieski refused to wear the sash, he would 'wear nothing but black henceforth,' and the incessant fluctuations in the temper and plans of his cruel *Astrea* only served to embitter his grief.

But this fourth quarter of the honeymoon was not to be of long duration. Fresh quarrels broke out, and faults were committed on both sides. As in past times, Marysieńka soon set ill-natured tongues a-wagging. She first of all caused a scandal by her introduction of the habit, as yet unknown in Poland, of receiving gentlemen while in bed. It was forthwith reported, with many a jest, that 'the lady received every one into her bed.' Then the Chevalier d'Arquien began to play pranks, throwing Zamoyski into such a fury that he was obliged to leave the castle, or risk losing his life, and so departed secretly. Meanwhile, the master of the dwelling continued his usual course. His life

was one unceasing orgy, his house was given over to pillage, and drunken hiccoughs mingled with his fondest demonstrations of tenderness. The condition of affairs was reported to Marie de Gonzague, and her intervention humbly sought. She suggested a divorce, or, if that could not be, a deed of separation, which should enable Marysieńka to live under her hateful husband's roof 'even as a daughter with her father.' But the lady herself suddenly declared she was content with her husband and her position. 'It was her own fault and her youth,' she said, which were responsible for their former disagreements. She was resolved, now, to 'obey him, and fulfil all his commands'; and to cap it all, when Zamoyski authorised her to return to Paris, and offered to provide all the necessary funds, she refused, and avowed her intention of never leaving him again, and of nursing his infirmities.

Contradictory as all these changes seem, they were, I believe, founded on reason. They certainly corresponded with the alterations evident in Zamoyski's health, which was growing more and more uncertain. There had already been some talk of a will, by the terms of which Marysieńka had been careful to secure the whole of the huge inheritance which, as every one firmly believed, was shortly to fall vacant. But those who disseminated the story slandered the 'new Semiramis' (as she was dubbed in this connection), or, at all events, rated her talents above their actual worth. Yet it is clear enough that she was anxious about her husband's last arrangements, and did not care to leave him to the influence of the persons about him, all of them odious to her and hostile to her interests. When Zamoyski grew worse, she temporised; when he grew better, her impatience grew too strong to be restrained. He had the grace to spare her too prolonged a trial. In the month of April 1665, she became a widow. '•

But her powers of calculation failed her, and she missed the critical moment. How, and in what circumstances, shall be forthwith related.

CHAPTER VI

IL MATRIMONIO SEGRETO

- I. The 'Great Affair' takes a tragic turn—Lubomirski's sentence—He takes refuge in Poland—Prospect of civil war—The allies—The Emperor and the Elector of Brandenburg—Sobieski refuses to take the rebel's place—Marysieńka summoned to Warsaw—A divorce proposed—Sobieski's submission—Fresh incidents—Zamoyski changes his mind—A secret marriage—The case not clear—Documentary evidence.
- II. A fresh actor in the drama—The Bishop of Béziers at Warsaw—Disputes with Sobieski—Understanding with the Queen—A trap—A night in May—Her Majesty interferes—An obliging priest—Wedded at last—M. d'Arquien's fury.
- III. Zamoyski's funeral—Marysieńka's attempt on Zamosc—A rough reception—Rumours of the *Matrimonio Segreto*—'Off with the Sobkowa!'—An unlucky campaign—The *church rat* and the *old shoe*—Sobieski kept at a distance—Distress in the Royal Army—French officers—The Comte de Guiche—A catastrophe—Lubomirski triumphs—The 'Great Affair' seems dead and buried.

I

MY readers will suspect that the trial had lasted too long as it was, and that Marysieńka's natural eagerness had carried her away. And indeed that last year of conjugal existence, which preceded her second marriage, was a terrible one to her. No more pleasant visitors; no more journeys to Warsaw. Nothing but a sick man to nurse, and the dreariness of her solitude deepened by a fresh mourning. The child whom she had forsaken for the delights of Paris was taken, like the others, from the mother who had not known how to love her. It might, not unnaturally, be concluded that the strain had grown unbearable, and that Marysieńka, leaving her future fate to take its chance, had hurried whither her tastes and her affections beckoned her. She certainly was at Warsaw—at which place Sobieski,

on whom Marie de Gonzague was pouring an increasing shower of favour and caresses, made constant stays—during the month of April 1665. But it was no wavering of her strong and essentially practical spirit which had brought her there.

Serious events were taking place in the Polish capital. Yielding to the imperious pressure of the French king, the Court had finally determined to make an end of Lubomirski. In November 1664 the great faction leader had been summoned before the Diet, converted for the nonce into a High Court of Justice, on a charge of treason. Sentenced by default to death and infamy, he had taken refuge in Silesia, and was now preparing to return triumphant, sword in hand. War was imminent, and the only means of resistance consisted of an army which possessed neither leader nor discipline. That fact had been amply proved during the Muscovite campaign. The only available commander, and he both skilful and popular, was the very criminal against whom battle was to be waged. His sole possible successor was Sobieski, a man, as the Queen believed, with a great future before him, but whose past was mainly insignificant. And behold, Sobieski declined the office! He had fought his first campaign under Lubomirski; he was his friend, his relative, and above all, he was Lubomirski. The very name had its effect upon the imagination of the *parvenu's* son. And besides, did he not represent, or claim to represent, an ideal, a faith and principles, common to every one? What was at the root of it all? Was it not an attempt, by the Court, to ensure the heredity of the throne, and at the same time to reform the political arrangements of the country by making a serious rent in the laws of its Constitution, thus treading on that forbidden ground whereon every true gentleman believed the honour of his rank and the dignity of his life to rest? Every reference to the *Bastille* in Lubomirski's manifestoes, and Sobieski's letters, takes precisely the same tone. There could be no doubt, besides,

that Lubomirski would succeed in stirring up all the dark corners of the *liberum veto*, and outside the country, as well, he would have allies. The Emperor would not let such an opportunity of checkmating the policy of France slip through his fingers; and the Elector of Brandenburg was reported to be treating with his neighbour of Neuburg, offering him the crown of Poland in return for certain territory which was to round up his perpetually increasing possessions. The game was risky, and the advantage anything but certain. In the last place, *Celadon's* decision was swayed by a woman's influence. Though he had given Marysienka no cause to accuse him of infidelity, she had a 'sort of half rival—a cousin of his own, 'more cunning,' according to the Marquis de Lumbres, 'and more spiteful' than Marysienka, and quite as expert in the art of pleasing. Now this fair cousin was Lubomirski's sister-in-law.

Marie de Gonzague would not acknowledge herself beaten. She went so far as to believe she held the winning card, but if she was to play her great trump successfully, Marie Zamoyska must not tarry at Zamosc, and there enact the part of the model wife. A courier was forthwith despatched, bearing so pressing and imperative a message, that Zamoyski himself insisted that his wife should obey the summons sent by her 'good mistress.' Some days later, that very chamber in the palace of Warsaw, within the walls of which Marysienka's nuptial toilette had been performed, was the theatre of a very different scene. *Astrea* was listening to *Celadon's* passionate protestations, and dropping the word 'divorce' into her lover's ear. Zamoyski's health had somewhat improved!

But would the husband agree to a separation? Yes, surely, if the Queen herself pressed it upon him. Marie de Gonzague beamed triumphant—she held her man at last. For Sobieski, leaving the fateful chamber, submitted utterly, only petitioning for a few weeks' respite, to give him time to take his measures, sound public opinion, and call his friends together. Had not Lubomirski publicly declared that 'no

man would be found to dishonour himself by appropriating that which had been stripped from the shoulders of an innocent person'? A journey through the provinces was an absolute necessity. But Marysieńka was to remain at Warsaw. She had informed Zamoyski of this decision, and he had agreed.

Suddenly the whole face of things changed once more. Hardly had Sobieski returned to Zolkiew before a dropping fire of unpleasant news began to assail him. The report of his promotion to the offices held by Lubomirski had spread over Warsaw, and been greeted there with an almost unanimous cry of disapproval. Now the only office he had accepted was that of Grand Marshal, and he had extracted a promise of secrecy even as to it. The appointment of Field Hetman (*Polny Hetman*) was to have been bestowed on Czarniecki. But now Sobieski was apprised of Czarniecki's sudden death, and of his own appointment to this second dignity. At the bottom of his heart he yearned intensely to have an army under his command, but torn between his longings, and his shame at his own greediness, he dared not make the venture. Like all the weak and undecided characters in history, he equivocated and strove to gain time. Then once again Zamoyski changed his front, and political and diplomatic considerations took on a sudden and unexpected importance in his eyes. Like all his family, he had sided, up to this point, with Lubomirski, though never dreaming that the former Grand Marshal's freak would be carried to such lengths. Now that the business began to take on a tragic complexion, Marysieńka's husband took alarm at the thought of making common cause with an abettor of civil war. He had no taste for tragedies, and possessed a large amount, besides, of genuine patriotism. What better chance could he have of regaining favour with the Court, which bore him a grudge, than through his wife? And thereupon he began to overwhelm her with politeness, sued her pardon for his own misdoings, said not a word of his grievances against her, and would not hear of any idea of separation.

Forthwith Sobieski, on his side, declared his intention of 'giving up everything.' If he was to play his old part of *Celadon* and live 'within the bounds of virtue' into the bargain, he was not prepared to 'dishonour himself' for nothing. Neither Marshal nor Hetman would he be. Marie de Gonzague was at her wits' end, and Marysienka knew not what to decide. Zamoyski drank one glass of wine too many, and settled the difficulty for them. This was on April 7th, 1665.

A few weeks later, during the month of May, a report calculated to surprise and scandalise the least censorious, even in the seventeenth century, spread over Poland, and even beyond the borders of that country. Sobieski and Marie Zamoyska were married! What? Already! But there hardly had been time to bury Zamoyski! As a matter of fact he was not buried yet; for in Poland the huge distances, the difficulty of communicating—especially in spring, when the roads grew heavy—with the relatives of the dead person, and gathering them together, usually necessitated considerable delay, which increased in proportion to the rank of the deceased, and the elaborateness of the closing ceremony. It did not take place on this occasion till the first days of June. Had the widow actually married again before the funeral?

The more good-natured refused to believe it, and this belief was confirmed when, in the following July, the *Gazette de France* officially announced the marriage, and gave the date of the celebration as 'the 6th of this month.' This, though somewhat early, was still not quite so indecent. Yet the first report continued in circulation, and the reputation of the young couple suffered in consequence. Documents which have since come to light have convinced, or almost convinced, the best judges, that the ill-natured party spoke the truth. Niemirycz, an agent of the Elector of Brandenburg, attached to the person of Lubomirski, has left us a detailed account of the secret marriage which preceded the official ceremony. It is mentioned in the

despatches of the French minister at Warsaw. And, to conclude, the correspondence of the accused persons seems to offer the most undeniable proof of the fact. A few days after the burial of Zamoyski, there was a meeting between *Celadon* and *Astrea* in the neighbourhood of Zamosc, and on the morrow, *Celadon*, parted once more from his fair mistress, wrote her a letter, still in existence, which opens thus:—

‘Ravishing little wife, the greatest consolation of my soul and of my heart! Thy beauty, my dearest lady, has so bewitched me, that I have never closed my eyes all night.’

His next letters, dated only a few days later, are quite as explicit. They are evidently those of a husband speaking to his wife, in the most homely fashion, of the private details of their common life. And he refers in the most open manner to their next meeting, and to the fashion in which he will avenge ‘*sur son petit raisin sec, toutes ses longues impatiences. . .*’

The editors of this correspondence, M. Kluczycki and M. Helcel, have had no hesitation in deciding as to the testimony it bears. M. Czermak, in a very closely reasoned study, which will be found among his essays on John-Casimir, has taken the same view. Alone, or almost alone, Sobieski's last biographer, M. Korzon, thinks otherwise. But his case, as I have already remarked, is a special one. He *does not choose* that any secret marriage should have existed, and once he has taken up this position, he will do anything to maintain it. Sobieski himself mentions the date of his marriage several times over, and with the utmost precision, as May the 6th, 1665. But, according to M. Korzon, he was certainly mistaken. In one of the letters written by the husband to the wife before the official marriage in July, and in which he calls her his ‘Rose,’ I notice this slightly incongruous, but very explicit, sentence, ‘When I think that the hour of our meeting is still distant, and that all that time *something is growing, growing within the rose. . .*’ What? inquires good M. Korzon. I will not undertake to explain

before my lady readers, but I think they will hardly require my assistance in the matter. As to the testimony of the French envoy, M. Korzon puts it peremptorily aside. 'What proof is it? He was not present at the ceremony; he only spoke of it on hearsay. Look at his despatch, dated 3rd July 1665' (*Fortunes of Sobieski*, p. 305). I turn to the original of the despatch referred to (Paris Foreign Office, Poland, vol. xxi. p. 523), and I read, 'I was summoned to be witness of the secret ceremony of this marriage' (in the month of May).

There is no possibility of shirking these facts, and the author of the *Fortunes of Sobieski* might well bear me a grudge if I were to make them the basis of any effort to convince him. I make no pretension of that kind. And indeed I have but few fresh or more conclusive documents to bring forward as evidence. There are letters at Chantilly, it is true, which refer to the secret marriage, but they are only from the father and mother of Marysieńka, who, though doubtless well informed, can hardly have known more about the matter than their son-in-law. I am quite willing to believe they will make no impression on M. Korzon, and that Marysieńka's reputation and her husband's (for it is their reputation, it would appear, that is in question, and M. Korzon sets himself up as its defender) will continue to reap the advantage of a healthy and touching incredulity on his part, and that of a certain number of his readers. But I should be sorry on that account—and I will even add, on so trifling a matter—to deprive my readers and myself of one of the most piquant chapters in this history.

II

Contrary to the general expectation, Sobieski did not hurry to Warsaw the moment he received news of Zamoyski's death. Face to face with the near and easy realisation of his fondest hopes, he recoiled instinctively, as may frequently be noticed in the case of irresolute natures like his. Perhaps,

too, he thought he had been too unceremoniously treated. And being, like all weak men, specially affected by the influences nearest him, he probably felt that his only chance of regaining his independence lay in remaining at a distance. He buried himself in his country house at Zolkiew, lay there *perdu*, and for several weeks Marysieńka was left widowed indeed. It was not till the end of the month, when the course he had pursued had rendered him infinitely dearer in her eyes, that he appeared in the capital—and then, forthwith, the old charm worked again. Marysieńka, indeed, seemed to him more attractive than ever. She was beautiful still, under her mourning veil, and never had she been so gentle nor so kind. She had been left with a slender dowry, and even that disputed by Zamoyski's heirs. Sobieski was at her feet at once; agreed, although such haste was somewhat repugnant to his feelings, that she should write to her parents to ask their consent to her second marriage; allowed himself to be appointed Grand Marshal, and let it be understood that he might shortly accept the second post. Marie de Gonzague undertook to communicate with M. and Mme. d'Arquien, and herself make a request which had by that time become quite indispensable, both in her own and in her *protégée's* eyes.

But the Queen's troubles were not yet over. A few days later, the new Grand Marshal's face wore a heavy cloud, and alarming reports were current in the town. Was he too going to turn his coat? Some one, he declared, was spoiling his game. But who? A new partner, with whom, in future, all would have to reckon.

As early as December of the preceding year the French king had decided that the condition of affairs in Poland arising out of the measures taken against Lubomirski, necessitated a change in his diplomatic representation in that country. The Marquis de Lumbres was worn out, and besides, his discreet and prudent methods were more suited to the style of diplomacy affected by Mazarin. French policy was now conducted in a far more lively manner.

In January 1665 the Marquis was recalled, and his successor, Pierre de Bonzy, Bishop of Béziers, started on his road to Warsaw. Quite a different man this: young, good-looking, of quick intelligence and resolute character, bold in speech, and with all the easy carriage of a prelate who knows the world. He arrived without any pre-conceived policy, resolved to see everything himself, and judge accordingly. Sobieski's countenance did not impress him favourably, and Caillet, the agent of the Condé princes, confirmed this feeling. He described Marie Zamoyska's future husband as 'a careless-minded man, more interested in his pleasures than anxious for advancement.' Des Noyers added, 'irresolute, and though tinged with republicanism, endeavouring to buy the friendship of the nobles by humouring them.' As to his military aptitudes, the reply was yet more disconcerting: 'brave, but with no knowledge of the art of war; quite wanting in skill; has never served out of Poland.'¹ The ambassador protested. Was this the man to put forward against Lubomirski? Impossible! And besides, what security was there for his fidelity? His intended marriage? But quite recently he had entertained very different plans. This was well known in France; and even now there was talk of one of the Duke of Courland's daughters! All this was sure to end in fresh disappointment and more waste of time. France was weary of the whole thing, and the hour for prompt and decisive action had arrived. Four thousand Swedes would shortly be landed at Dantzic, and the Prince de Condé himself would take command. He had just announced this fact to the Queen of Poland, in terms which bore witness to his personal determination. He said (the original document is at Chantilly) that he was 'happy to risk his life as some acknowledgment of the obligations he owed Her Majesty, and was persuaded that though another man might have more capacity and experience, no other could feel a more passionate and zealous desire to carry out this

¹ Letter from Des Noyers to Condé, dated 27th January, and letter from Caillet to Condé, dated 3rd April, 1665 (Chantilly Archives).

business.' But lo! the Queen herself now seemed a prey to her former doubts and hesitations. The spectre of civil war was terrifying her once again. All this, no doubt, was owing to that miserable Sobieski's influence.

The fiery bishop soon found he was mistaken. Marie de Gonzague feared no ghost. Certain occult influences did indeed hover around her in the shade, and round her husband too, but they were wielded by living creatures, compact of human flesh and blood—to wit, by their Majesties' confessors, and above all, by their Majesties' astrologers. The first-named were devoted to the Emperor, the second were in Lubomirski's pay. The King, who had no great faith in the 'great affair,' was not indifferent to the temptation offered by a certain horoscope, which promised him two wives—a widow and a maid—and guaranteed the assistance of the heavenly powers to prevent the extinction of his line. The Queen, always prone to indifference in religious matters, had the simplest faith in the rites of the diviner. Now the diviners assured Her Majesty that no attempt made against Lubomirski during the current year would bear good fruit. 'The directions and revolutions of the ex-Marshal indicate that he is favoured, at the present moment, by a great lady, who will cease to favour him in the month of January in the coming year'—apparently, as it would seem to us, when the rebel's preparations had been successfully made.

Thus warned, the unlucky Queen thought it her duty to gain time, and with this object conceived the plan of entering into negotiations with the man she had caused to be condemned to death, and offering to restore him to the offices she had just forced Sobieski to accept. Sobieski, getting wind of the affair, and not knowing whom to suspect, accused De Bonzy, lost his temper, and went so far as to 'stamp his foot' in the Queen's presence.

At last there was a general explanation, and the bishop's conversation with the 'careless-minded man' removed the churchman's prejudices. Taking it all in all, no better choice could well be made, only there must be no more

astrological disturbance of the Queen's brain. The stars must be taught a lesson. By a fortunate chance, the favourite astrologer of the royal couple turned out to be a certain native of Béziers, named Morin. The pastor summoned this member of the flock into his presence, and went so far as to revise his horoscopes. The stars, on a sudden, were made to speak a different language. The directions and revolutions altered their course, the great lady fell out with her *protégé* far earlier than had at first been expected, and Marie de Gonzague, the bishop felt convinced, would certainly apply her whole mind to following these favourable auguries.

But meanwhile Sobieski's brow continued dark, and Condé wrote from Chantilly, that he was informed the marriage with the Princess of Courland was still a possibility. Under such circumstances it would have been madness to make a start. The horse to be driven might be good or bad, but at all events the reins must be firmly held. *Astrea* was called into council. Could she answer for *Celadon*? Yes, she replied, if she could be certain he would marry her, and not his princess. She herself was very uneasy on that point. She held her lover's promise indeed, but at that moment she was the most abused and slandered widow in all Poland. People even went so far as to accuse her of having poisoned Zamoyiski. They had nicknamed her *Clytemnestra*, and all this was telling on Sobieski. Half his low spirits were caused by this annoyance. What would happen in a year? for certainly he would not marry sooner, —she knew his respect for outward propriety, and over-regard for what the world might say.

At this point a smile—the Bishop of Béziers easily caught its meaning—flitted across Marie de Gonzague's features. And before long the half-Italian Queen and the half-Roman priest had agreed on their plan, and settled on the mounting of a scene which was to strip Sobieski of his scruples. For him, as for Lubomirski, an ambushade was planned,—minus the executioners. The *dénouement*, this time, was to

partake of the nature of a comedy. *Astrea*, having duly learnt her lesson, avoided *Celadon* for a whole week, and received him at last, as dusk was falling, in her chamber in the Garden Palace, one of the royal residences, later known as the Casimir Palace. It was mid-May, the windows opened on a park sweet with spring odours, and alive with happy singing-birds. My readers will guess the rest. At the critical moment Marie de Gonzague burst into the room; there was a fine explosion of well-acted rage and surprise, vehement reproaches, and such expressions as 'scandal,' 'outrage before God,' and 'treason to the sovereigns.'

Sobieski gave way completely. This man—he was a great man, and also a very cunning man—never wholly cast off a certain innocent simplicity. The Queen fell upon him, rated and lectured him. She raved of honour and religion, and talked of the indispensable reparation he must make. He bowed his head. It was eleven o'clock at night. At midnight a priest appeared upon the scene. This may have been Cieciszewski, the King's confessor, of whom the Abbé de Paulmier, the future agent of the De Longueville family in Poland, has left us this pleasing sketch: 'A man full of intrigues—for which reason the late Queen caused him to be dismissed twice over . . . celebrated also for always having the best wine in his cellar, good ducats in his purse, and good horses in his stables . . . and remarkable, too, for never moving about the country except well mounted, with great pistols in his holsters and a sword at his side.' A quarter of an hour later, Sobieski, stunned by his adventure, but married, more or less correctly, quitted the palace.¹

They held him firmly now. Body and soul, as Marie de Gonzague had claimed, he belonged . . . to whom? To every person in the secret of the mysterious espousals, the

¹ I have adopted the version given by Niemirycz, reproduced by M. Czermak, from the Berlin Archives, and confirmed by the Chantilly documents, with which he was unacquainted. The complicity of the Bishop of Béziers, denied by him at a later date—at least as concerning the laying of the trap—is formerly asserted by Marysieńska herself, in her letters to her parents.

story of which, if put abroad, would stir up all Poland against him. And, thoroughly tamed, he departed, a few days later, from Warsaw, to rejoin the army, and open the campaign against Lubomirski, while his wife took her way to Zamosc. It was time, after all, to bury Zamoyski!

Just at that moment, the request for their daughter's hand, which had been sent to M. and Mme. d'Arquien, was delivered in Paris. And with one consent they wrote to decline the proposal. M. d'Arquien appealed to the promise he had made his daughter to recall her to his side in the event of her widowhood, and never to consent to her making a second settlement in a country where it was vain for her to expect 'either health or happiness.' 'She owed much gratitude to God for having delivered her from a husband of whom she had so little reason to speak highly—both on account of the discomfort he caused her, and that which he brought on himself.' Mme. d'Arquien's refusal was less specific. If the Queen of Poland could have lived for ever, Marysienka's mother would have been prepared to 'immolate' her daughter a second time, in the service of so great a sovereign. 'But if, by some evil chance, she were to be left without Her Majesty, and found herself married to a man whose courage and manner of life made his own existence there so uncertain, she might find herself, for the second time, in her present condition.' In short, Mme. d'Arquien would have desired to see her daughter in an '*hétabylissement où il se trouve du solide, et non pas toujours de la peur et de la peine pour cette petite veuve.*' And from this point of view, Sobieski's suit did not inspire her with confidence. Maternal instinct, in this good lady's case, was not prophetic.

It was not until June that the worthy couple became aware of what had happened on that May night in the Garden Palace. The Marquis fell into a fury. To justify myself in my reader's eyes, I will produce the letter which he thought himself in duty bound to write to the Queen of Poland, as an expression of his surprise and indignation.

M. Korzon will kindly excuse me if I seem to overlook his view of the matter. This document is dated 12th June 1665.

‘I can tell your Majesty that nothing in the world ever surprised me so much as the letter which you did me the honour to write to me on the 15th of last month—so different from that with which your Majesty honoured me a few days before, whereby your Majesty had done me the kindness of making me aware of my daughter’s widowhood, and of the necessity of remarrying her to a powerful person, such as M. Sobieski, in favour of whom your Majesty asked my consent . . . and by this letter, Madam (and at the same time M. le Duc d’Anguien, on your Majesty’s part and on his own, only desired that I should listen to this proposal—it being unheard of that a woman should talk of marrying only a month after she is a widow), your Majesty has informed me that you have remarried her secretly (to the knowledge nevertheless of every one), and that your Majesty, according to what you do me the honour of telling me, has used the power I gave your Majesty of disposing of her. Therefore I humbly crave your Majesty’s pardon, if I say that the love I had for my daughter induced me to send my consent to her marriage with M. de Zamoyski seven years ago; but, after having learnt from her how little satisfaction this marriage gave her, I resolved, if her husband died, to withdraw her to her native country, trusting to your Majesty’s justice to leave me full use of the power which fathers hold over their children (by all Divine and human laws). But now, Madam, when your Majesty informs me that you have disposed of my daughter according to your own will, and without my consent (which your Majesty has therefore considered of no value), the respect which I owe to so great a queen (as, Madam, your Majesty) prevents me from speaking my mind, and leaves me for ever with the memory of Mme. de Zamoyska’s misbehaviour. This is all that can be said to

your Majesty, by him who will be all his life, with the deepest respect, etc.'

Neither Marie de Gonzague nor the newly married couple seem to have taken this vehement protest very seriously. By the same post, the Duc d'Anguien assured them that the Marquis would soon calm down—'he must be mad.' As to Mme. d'Arquien, she did not say a word; she had made her own inquiries as to the offices recently conferred on Sobieski, and was apparently satisfied that the 'hétabylissement' was sufficient.

III

The burial of Zamoyski was a serious business, and Marysienka expected her share in it would amount to something beyond a mere demonstration of decency or sentiment. Strategically, and above all, politically, speaking, the possession of Zamosc was of considerable importance. It was believed that Lubomirski would endeavour to take possession of the town. Some of his relations, collateral kinsmen of Zamoyski's, who claimed the dead man's inheritance, were there already. It was important to throw in a garrison which should be devoted to the Court party. But the troops of the Polish Republic had not free access to private fortresses. In such circumstances, the only possible course was to appeal to the right universally recognised by private persons in circumstances of contested ownership—a right the memory of which is evoked with such brilliant success in Mickiewicz's well-known poem, 'Thaddeus.' This was called a *zajazd*. Serving-men, friends, and domestic men-at-arms (these existed in most great Polish houses) were called to horse, the territory was invaded, and a battle occasionally fought. Zamoyski's widow had a right to claim certain things at Zamosc—her furniture, for instance, and security for her dowry. She was granted an escort, a company of infantry. Troops of the Republic, you say? Yes, but drawn from those under the command of Sobieski—himself an interested

party. This had been one of Marie de Gonzague's reasons for hastening on the marriage. The public was to be left in ignorance, indeed, but at a later period it might be appealed to. Meanwhile Marysieńka was to get into the fortress, and her husband received orders to collect a larger body of troops in the neighbourhood, and to render armed assistance to his wife, if that seemed necessary.

The plan failed miserably. To begin with, the messenger sent by Marysieńka to announce her arrival at Zamosc received a sorry welcome. One of the dead man's sisters, the Princess Wisniowiecka, greeted him with these words—

'Your mistress did not invite us to her wedding; we do not invite her to the funeral.'

The *Matrimonio segreto* had been noised abroad.

When, notwithstanding this rebuff, Marysieńka arrived at the entrance to the castle, she was met by closed doors, and, what was worse, her way was barred by an evidently hostile crowd. The whole town had turned out. Boldly she spoke to them—

'Is it thus you receive your mistress?'

A voice was raised. 'Like mistress, like greeting!'

'Do you know to whom you speak?'

'Yes, to Sobieski's wife!'

She had left her carriage, but she returned to it hastily and departed, followed by a shout which made her pale with rage.

'Off with the *Sobkowia*!'

Sobkowia meant the wife of *Sobek*, and *Sobek* was the nickname bestowed by spiteful people, playing ill-naturedly upon the word, on the future deliverer of Vienna. The Polish term *Sobek* is synonymous with *selfish fellow*.

She made another effort to quarter herself in one of the neighbouring farms, parleyed, tore her dress in her fury (as one chronicler informs us), and made up her mind, at last, to beat a retreat.

Sobieski had not shown his face. They did not meet again till she was on her way back to Warsaw. She found

him desperately in love, but quite unable to avenge her defeat. Generally speaking, he gave no sign, during the campaign then opening, of being the man he was later to prove himself. Various causes at first combined to paralyse his upward flight. To begin with, the position in which his secret marriage placed him was far from calculated to increase his prestige and authority. Then there was a certain residuum of suspicion in the mind of the *church rat* (as he and Marysieńka disrespectfully denominated the Bishop of Béziers). And further, as ever, the vacillations of "*the weathercock*" must be taken into account. Marie de Gonzague was certainly far too much addicted to politics and diplomacy. In old days, during her struggle with Sweden, she had negotiated sword in hand. She was bent on continuing in the same fashion, and too much power in Sobieski's hands, or too much enterprise on his part, would deprive her of all possibility of making terms with Lubomirski. Marysieńka's husband had not only a bridle on his neck, but shackles on his feet. 'They call me Chief of the Party,' he writes to his wife. 'It is a jest,' and he adds, 'I can bear no more.'

The result was disastrous. In France, at Chantilly, and at Versailles,—for the Versailles days were already beginning—there was raging and fuming. An arrangement was made with Holland for the passage, over the Dutch canals, of a body of troops destined for the Baltic. First Terlon, and then Pomponne, was sent to Stockholm, to arrange for the renewal of the engagements entered into three years previously. Marie de Gonzague never ceased crying out for money. 'The kingdom of Poland is for sale,' she exclaimed to De Bonzy.

'We may be sure of that,' replied the Bishop, 'but there are difficulties about the price, and uncertainty concerning the safe delivery of the merchandise.'

At Chantilly, and even at Versailles, he was thought somewhat too unbending. Des Noyers wrote to Chantilly—
'The Queen is greatly rejoiced when she reads in the

Gazettes of the millions which M. Colbert is gathering into the King's coffers. If we do not receive some of them here, we are utterly lost. She is very much ashamed to be so importunate with the King ; but the extremity in which we are, and her conviction that it will be another step towards acquiring universal monarchy for him, make her hope he will continue not to lose patience with her.' Condé carried this letter to Versailles. The reference to 'universal monarchy' had the expected effect—and the King parted with another million.

The death of the King of Spain, in September 1665, threatened to cut off all help from the French quarter. And many other troubles were to come. But in November the King summoned Condé to his *coucher*, and declared, there being no witnesses present, that 'whatever affairs might supervene, he set that of Poland before all others.' They would end by 'overcoming the impossible.'

But the difficulty continued unsurmountable. Even Sweden, having had leisure, during the past three years, to meditate on the danger involved in a fresh invasion of Poland, resisted the persuasions of M. de Pomponne. The last had brought about most unpleasant disputes with Denmark, a country now allied with Poland. And the Swedish Government had been informed that Denmark was to be included in the Franco-Dutch League against Great Britain. Let each man see to his own interests! So in February 1666, the news of the signature of an Anglo-Swedish Treaty in London reached the Versailles Court.

No more hope of the help of Swedish troops! Even access to the Baltic had become impossible. No matter, the King would not give in. He still felt the same 'passionate sincerity' with regard to 'his Polish business,' and kept Condé by his bed till all hours, talking it over. He fell back once more on 'gentle methods,' and Bonzy received inquiries as to 'the price of the merchandise.' Would three millions be sufficient?

Alas! even in Poland, the merchandise was slipping away.

All through the year 1665, and the following one, there was perpetual marching and counter-marching between the Royal camp, and that of the arch-rebel, with no apparent object but to gain time, and wait on, in the hope that some fortunate event might give the belligerents the opportunity of agreeing before they actually came to blows. Lubomirski shrank from a combat which must be fratricidal, and the Royal army, ill equipped, and worse commanded, was anything but fit for the struggle. The general in chief was the aged Potočki—a soldier who had once been valiant, but had always been unfortunate, and who was now worn out, and almost doting. Sobieski and Marysieńska called him the *old shoe*. Everything was at sixes and sevens. This was evident enough to foreign witnesses;—the brilliant French officers, who had been attracted to the camp by the hope of fighting under the orders of the victor of Nordlingen—De Comminges, De Mailly, St. Germain, and the Comte de Guiche—whose correspondence with Madame had just been treacherously betrayed by his friend De Vardes, and who had come with the deliberate intention of seeking a glorious death.

On the 9th of July 1666, Bouillaud, Des Noyers' correspondent in Paris, wrote as follows: 'It is well known that Madame's plan was to ruin the La Vallière, in order that the King might fall in love with herself. This failing, she smiled on the Comte de Guiche, and told him 'there were forty gentlemen, each of whom she esteemed more highly than the King, which emboldened the Comte de Guiche to pay his court to her' (Foreign Office Papers).

These men, who had served under Condé or Turenne, shrugged their shoulders at a sight so novel in their eyes. Often Sobieski would weep with rage; he could do nothing, was never listened to, had no authority anywhere.

In July 1666, there was a fight at last, and the messenger sent to Chantilly and Versailles bore no tidings of victory. King John-Casimir, who took command in person, entangled himself imprudently in a dangerous defile, and his Dragoons

were utterly cut up. Four thousand of his best troops, and almost two hundred officers, were left upon the field. On the morrow of the battle, the Comte de St. Germain was found amongst the slain.

It is true that Lubomirski did not pursue his advantage. He certainly was not the Cromwell he was held to be in France. He preferred reopening negotiations. His conditions were very hard. A whole month was wasted in discussion, and then, when the Royal resources became exhausted—'the day the money came to an end,' as De Bonzy wrote—the Court gave in.

The victor, as though startled by his victory, and half ashamed of it, did indeed agree to do public penance to the vanquished. And the story goes, that, just as he bent the knee before the King, the curtains of the tent were drawn asunder. Sobieski, we are told, was present. And it is even said that the rebel, the fallen leader, passing round the circle composed of his former comrades in arms—who most of them, like the new Grand Marshal himself, had been his subordinates—paused before his rival, stretched out his hand, laid it on his head with a gesture that was half pardon and half reproach, and silently withdrew. He accepted his dismissal, but he had stipulated that there was to be no more talk of the 'great affair.' Thus, the King lived on, but the monarchy was dead. As to the 'great affair'—dead and buried though it seemed—it was to raise its head again. From that time onward, Poland has been constantly haunted by ghosts.

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CHAPTER VII

A BATTLE OF INTERESTS, AND A LOVE QUARREL

- I. Romance carried beyond marriage—Marivaux forestalled—Another love quarrel—Marysieńka and the Bishop of Béziers—'Duty'—The Bishop throws his handkerchief—A woman's battle—D'Arquien *versus* De Mailly—The domestic hearth.
- II. Parted once more—The 'Great Affair' reopened—Fresh negotiations with Lubomirski—More treachery—Death of the traitor—Hope revives—Condé dons Polish attire—'Heroic resolutions'—Proposed campaigns on the Rhine and Vistula—Disappointment—Death of Marie de Gonzague.
- III. Fresh plans—A grotesque suggestion—Change in French policy—Condé renounces his claim to Poland—The shade of Mazarin—The pupil returns to his master—The passages of the Rhine—The Neuburg Candidature.
- IV. John-Casimir's abdication—His visit to France—Marie Mignot—The King's death—His epitaph by Coulanges—Failure of French policy in Poland.
- V. The cause of the failure—A wandering fancy—Marysieńka's rivals—Her departure for France—Leave-taking—Monseigneur's 'duel'—Sobieski's despair—The traveller is silent—The forsaken man falls ill—At the point of death—Recovery—The victory of Podhaice—On the brink of immortality—Fresh griefs—The husband and the lover—Birth of a son—Domestic disagreements—M. d'Arquien intervenes—Marysieńka's disappointments in Paris—Defection of the Bishop of Béziers—Triumph of Mme. Denhof—The return—A parenthesis—Sobieski's fidelity—A cosmopolitan maid of honour—Mlle. de Villeneuve.
- VI. The meeting at Dantzic—Marysieńka's ill-temper—Hoped-for success in Poland—Disappointment—The Bishop of Béziers driven out of Warsaw—Collapse of the French party.

I

ROMANCE, generally speaking, ends where marriage begins, more especially when the hero of the romance becomes the husband. But Marie Zamoyska's romance was an exception to this rule. Neither as soldier nor as diplomat did Sobieski shine during his campaign against Lubomirski,

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in 1665 and 1666. In the character of lover, however, he made full amends for this failure. From this point of view he is full of superiority and charm; his only fault, a somewhat clumsy and excessive exuberance, the outcome of his awkward and too fervent imitation of his favourite models. The hours of separation caused him to endure 'a hundred executioners a minute,' 'plunged a thousand daggers in his heart,' and made him suffer 'a thousand million torments.' The image of his absent lady 'burnt him, and turned him into ashes.' Sometimes, happily, he would forget his master, and wish, in simpler fashion, that he might be 'a flea—not, indeed, to cause discomfort to so fair and tender a body, but so that, under that discreet disguise, he might remain in her adorable intimacy.' But when he wrote this he was inspired, perhaps, by Rabelais, as he had formerly been by Mlle. de Scudéry. The author of *Gargantua* was widely and assiduously read in Poland. It is regrettable, in any case, that these freaks of the lover's imagination, whether original or borrowed, should have tempted the editor of Sobieski's correspondence to use his scissors far too liberally. *Astrea* sent him back answers, some kind enough, but many of them cross and sulky. The part scarcely fitted her, and evidently strained her talent. She sent him a bracelet—'the prettiest that was ever seen'—made of her hair, copied out songs to cheer his evenings in camp, vowed she was 'ready to die with sorrow,' and already grown so ugly with fretting as to be unrecognisable. To which he answered, like a hero, 'That is of no consequence, the virtues of your mind alone have bound me!' Then she added that she was ill, 'and he would soon be a widower;' whereupon he questioned the Chevalier de Comminges, the bearer of this dreary news, and was assured that '*Mme. la Maréchale* had never been more cheerful, or more intent on amusing herself.' With his usual simplicity he demanded an explanation, and was met by the customary assertion of the skilled coquette.

Marysienka was jealous. She had discovered, at Warsaw, a coffer belonging to her husband, which had a secret lock, and

must conceal some very guilty secret. Instantly he sends her the key, and, by return of post, receives another thrust. A waiting-maid, this time, had given herself offensive and suggestive airs, after he had left the city. Sobieski was in despair. 'Could she not send the girl away?'

He was jealous, too, himself—but after his own fashion. 'I would fain absorb all your thoughts, and looks, and speech, so as to be the only person to enjoy them!' He had anxieties of his own, more sincere than his wife's—'true love is full of fear'—and better justified, alas! Was there not a story current that he had found his wife *en flagrant délit* with one of his own kinsmen, Radziejowski, and that he had beaten her? Beaten her! The very thought of striking her made him shudder! The utmost he had done was to reproach his beloved with some imprudence, and excessive familiarity with her French servants. Some of these had been seen stretched on her very bed! But no vile suspicion had ever crossed his mind!

Poor faithful lover! At that very moment, Warsaw and Paris, Versailles and Chantilly, were all agog over the report of another love quarrel, of which Marysienka was the heroine, while he was not the hero.

Though M. de Bonzy had undertaken to rule the Queen of Poland, and had partly succeeded, he had not thought it wise to refuse to listen to her advice. He had heard M. de Lionne compare her to Catherine de Medicis, and a few weeks' residence in Poland had convinced him of the justice of the compliment. Now one of the first pieces of advice Marie de Gonzague had bestowed on him was to obtain the complete confidence of two ladies whose influence weighed equally in matters of Court intrigue. 'This was indispensable to the performance of his duty.' One of these ladies has been already mentioned—that Mlle. de Mailly who married the Chancellor of Lithuania, Paç. The other, as my readers will divine, was Marysienka. De Bonzy felt some scruples. Such intimacies, he considered, 'were better suited to an ambassador than to a bishop'; but, he went on,

'as at the present time he was rather more of the former than of the latter, it became his duty to obey the maxims best suited to his temporal ministry.' And the result of this internal conflict was such, that the ambassador's despatches soon provoked malicious comments in the French Minister's study, and even in higher places yet. The sprightly prelate protested that 'all that he did was done in the way of duty. No doubt he would have only too many things in his life for which he must answer to God ; but if Poland only were to come into the question, he would be as great a saint there, as he was a sinner on the whole.' De Lionne smiled, and forthwith answered, 'It is not I, it is the greatest gentleman in this kingdom who has made mischievous remarks,—for noticing the constant mention in your despatches of the person in question, he deigned to say, laughingly, that you might very well have cast your handkerchief in that quarter. Besides, even if the thing were true, I should not esteem you one jot the less.'

The 'person in question' was Marysieńka, who, after a sharp contest, had won a decisive victory, the ambassador's original plan of personally holding the balance between the rivals having absolutely failed. The incidents of the struggle had been watched with the deepest interest both at Versailles and at Chantilly, and some alarm was felt as to the result. The Paç were people with whom it was well to be on good terms. As at the present day Marie Sobieska's virtue finds more defenders in Poland than in her own, my sincerity must doubtless be attested by a certain amount of documentary evidence. This I cull from the Chantilly archives and the correspondence of the great Condé with Des Noyers :—

'CHANTILLY, 30th April 1666.

'M. de Mailly, brother to the Chancellor's wife, is shortly returning to Poland, very ill pleased with the King and the ministers, because, as he declares, he has not been treated with complete confidence. He is not satisfied, either, according to what I am told, with me, or with my son, and for

the same reason. He says also that he is ill-pleased with the Queen (of Poland)—because she does not reward the MM. Paç according to their merits—and with M. de Béziers—because he obtains gifts for *Mme. La Grand Maréchale*, with whom he gives himself out to be in love, and has not obtained any for *Mme. La Chancelière*.

‘CHANTILLY, 3rd Sept. 1666.

‘I learn by your note of 6th August that the Queen continues to be dissatisfied with the ambassador. She fears his too great attachment to the *Grande Maréchale* may prejudice her business . . .’

‘CHANTILLY, 10th Sept. 1666.

‘I am no less puzzled than I was at the time of the last two posts as to what I should do about all the Queen has imparted to me, concerning the ambassador’s love, the jealousy it may rouse in the Paç family, and the difficulties it may cause either in Poland or here. I see but little remedy to be applied, for the King has extreme confidence in him, and he is greatly favoured by the ministers . . .’

‘CHANTILLY, 24th Sept. 1666.

‘I greatly fear that these petty women’s quarrels, which are beginning again, may have an evil effect. I would fain believe that the Queen . . . will have used her authority, and the influence she holds over the *Grande Maréchale*, to force her to give up the letters concerning which Mme. Paç makes complaint, and that, this being done, she will have reconciled them one to the other. I believe Her Majesty could do nothing more important in conjunction with present affairs.’

Thus, M. de Bonzy’s weakness for Marysieńka had carried him to the length of giving up her rival’s letters to her! I know not what use the fair creature proposed to make of them. But other and exceedingly exact information, to which I shall have to refer again, leaves me in no doubt as to the position in which she was placing Sobieski. I am sure

that nobody will suspect me of desiring to spice my narrative at the expense of things which I respect as much as any other man. But the truth is a matter also well worthy of respect. Bishops are not all alike, especially when a distance of two centuries divides them, and it is certain that in the year 1666 M. de Bonzy's handkerchief was exactly in the position which Louis XIV. had ascribed to it.

And yet Zamoyski's all too confiding successor was holding subtle disputation with his bride as to the quality of the tenderness she was showing him! He really believed that all he had to complain of was a certain lukewarmness of conjugal passion. 'A fig for a married love which fades into friendship before three months are out! You are not *Baucis*; I will be no *Philemon*. *Celadon* I am, as in the past—*Orondatus* or *Sylvander*, as you will—as passionately your lover as on the first day you were mine!' To which she replied, 'My name, now, is plain Marie Sobieska.'

They had been married, indeed, and that publicly, since the 6th of July 1665. The King had 'held the wedding feast,' and the ball which followed had lasted the whole night. But Meyerberg, the Emperor's resident in Warsaw, had not hesitated to dub the ceremony 'a comedy performed by people long since married.' And, as in the case of the first mysterious ceremony, the couple parted on the morrow. The campaign against Lubomirski was just beginning in earnest.

'A fine arrangement!' grumbled the husband. 'They never left us any peace until we married, and now we are married, they want to keep us apart!' The separation was to be a long one. A few days more were spent together at Warsaw, at the end of August, between two movements of troops; and after that, there was nothing, except hasty meetings under inhospitable roofs, in miserable inns, or barns close to some castle laid in ashes. In September, Marysienka, attended by a single waiting-woman, travelled fifty leagues to reach an out-of-the-way village, to which beseeching messages were calling her.

'Do not disappoint my hope, oh my adored benefactress—my dearest little mother! Let me find you at that blessed *Mszczonow*, which will hold all my treasure and all my joy. . . . Even now I cannot eat nor sleep for dreaming of it! The thought of all the pleasures and the joys awaiting me haunts me unceasingly. I see again that first sweet welcome—the sweetest any woman on earth ever bestowed on man, I see . . .'

And on he went, in a fashion which was to fill his future editors with alarm. But the fervour of his amorous eloquence, and the charm, it may be, of meeting under circumstances that smacked of adventure, helped him to cast a spell, for a few hours at all events, over the capricious beauty, and to recall her, too, to the intoxicating dream of a past that had vanished for ever. It was only a flash. He was obliged to depart again immediately, and she soon avowed herself 'incapable of running perpetually after him, like a gendarme.' When, after a long and perilous ride across a hostile country, he contrived another meeting, the 'sweetest of all welcomes' had quite disappeared. She was wearied out, we may be sure, and thought this last chapter in the novel quite superfluous. Nothing was left him but a desperate endeavour to call up memories of dead delights and vanished joys. His thoughts wandered back to many a casual incident of the bygone times. Once more the scenes of their earliest meetings rose up before his eyes. But oh! the change! 'Ah! that first stage close to Czersk, when they both thought they would have died of the pain of separation, even for a few days!—and that other at Zolkiew—and then that other at Chmiel! What tears they shed! How she vowed she could not live a day apart from *Celadon*! The hours were centuries long—they never could see enough of each other—they never had time to say all there was to tell! Did not *Astrea* wish they could live shut in a hollow tree, far from all men, and a thousand other things besides, to which she was soon not to give a thought? Did she remember yet? Why, once on a time, when *Sylvander*

was in bed, she could not gaze at him enough; and while he slept, and she was preparing for the night, she would pause now, to seek a place whence she could see him better, and then again, she would have the curtains drawn . . .'

No, she had forgotten it all! Neither in mind nor heart was she fitted to bear him company in this wild steeplechase, over a course far too long and trying for her small powers. Her breath had failed her utterly. And, indeed, he did wrong to take her freaks and fits of childish temper so seriously.

On the eve of starting for the distant Ukraine, he wrote 'till God knows when!'

'Farewell for ever,' she replied, and he was half distracted. This was going too far. She was joking, clearly; and whatever fresh fancies she might be indulging, she was herself half deceived by the theatrical and somewhat comical artifices, whereby they seemed agreed to prolong their preliminary love-skirmish even beyond the threshold of conjugal existence. They were playing one of Marivaux' comedies, though the great playwright was not yet born into the world; and the time was to come when both the actors in the never-ending, never-changing love-scene were to find they had nothing left to say. Then, in a rage, each was to strike and wound the other with the accessory properties of their parts. When the battle drew towards its close, a pillow was the weapon employed. On it *Celadon's* head had once rested, and *Astrea*, for that reason, had kept it tenderly. But now, the very head it had supported was displeasing to her. It was high time for both parties, when the close of the Civil War restored them to the quiet of their domestic hearth. Lubomirski's triumph did not come a day too soon.

II

But, alas! in that unhappy country, shivering already on the brink of its last mortal struggle, peace was to be of rare occurrence, and firesides were too often to be left deserted.

A BATTLE OF INTERESTS, AND A LOVE QUARREL

There was nothing of the Cromwell about Lubomirski. He proved this, superabundantly, when, two months after his victory, he signed a fresh treaty, which recalled the 'great affair' to life and possibility. Those Constitutional Laws of which he had constituted himself the patriot defender, only forbade the election of a new king, so long as the reigning monarch still bore the sceptre. John-Casimir was a healthy man, but he might abdicate. On more than one occasion he had seriously considered such a step. Marie de Gonzague undertook to induce him to think of it further, and more seriously, and this pledge formed the basis of the new treaty. Once the King's abdication was an accomplished fact, the former Grand Marshal engaged to place all his power and credit at the service either of the Prince de Condé or of the Duc d'Anguien, and would be satisfied, in return, with one or two mere trifles. The Castellunate of Cracow, two or three *starosties*, a share in the Wieliczka Salt Works, and 400,000 livres down, towards his expenses. Two Conventions were signed, one of which, being somewhat humiliating to the Polish magnate, was to be kept more especially secret. By its provisions he was forthwith to send his two sons into France, where they were to be kept as hostages.

The election was a certainty now, so Marie de Gonzague declared. She was as gullible as ever. Soon the first hitch came; and one fine morning Lubomirski announced—as he had done before, and just as coolly—that nothing was really settled. The signatures exchanged, the full powers conferred upon his representatives, his promises and vows, were all to count for nothing. And why? Because of what was, in all truth, a very trifling matter. Marie de Gonzague, when she promised the traitor a share in the Wieliczka Salt Works, had expected the French Government to compensate her for the sacrifice, which she calculated, somewhat liberally, at the rate of 500,000 livres. The authorities at Versailles had turned a deaf ear to this request, and she had accordingly made as though she would not relinquish her precious salt. The incident sufficed for Lubomirski's purpose.

'I refuse to describe the King's distress,' wrote M. de Lionne, on receiving the bad news. M. de Pomponne had just won a prodigious victory at Stockholm; and the Swedish Chancellor, Oxenstiern, had ceased haggling on any point, save that of the number of troops to be sent to Poland. Yet now, once more, the whole business had come to nothing. But this time, the courier who bore the ministerial lamentations crossed another on the road, carrying a joyful and triumphant missive from the Ambassador in Warsaw. Lubomirski was dead! (Jan. 1667.) M. de Bonzy roundly declared it was a miracle, and vowed Condé's election was a certainty, if only he would hasten his arrival. The King and Queen of Poland were eagerly expecting him. The Provincial Diets had, it was true, voted against the introduction of foreign troops into the country; but, now the leader was gone, the opposition would soon melt away. The Primate of the kingdom had himself sought the Ambassador, with a request that His Highness might hurry his departure. And Sobieski practically made himself responsible for the event. Negotiations lately opened with two other potentates, Wisniowiecki and Jablonowski, gave good hope of success. Both had been promised the baton of Field Hetman, with a sum of money thrown in, amounting in one case to 60,000, and in the other to 100,000 livres. Promise was not performance, and every possible economy would be practised; Lubomirski's death, in itself, 'would be a great saving.' To conclude, the High Chancellor had undertaken to gain over the most recalcitrant amongst the deputies, and had succeeded, on the stipulation that the French Prince was to wear the Polish garb, and to spend some years in command of the army in the Ukraine.

But, alas! the fancy portrait of the great Condé, dressed as a *Kontusz*, with long sleeves split up, and tossed proudly back over his shoulders, wide trousers thrust into untanned leather boots, and curved sabre on thigh, was never to find a place in the Gallery of Heroes at Chantilly. The master of Versailles was sorely put to it to discover how

he should take advantage of the fortunate juncture of events in Poland. The war with England made any landing at Dantzic risky, if not impossible, and M. de Pomponne's claims to victory had turned out somewhat premature.

'Ah! if the Prince and his army could only fly across!'

'But it was understood that he would fly!' replies the impetuous De Bonzy, adding that they would be content with Condé's own appearance in person, and would contrive, even so, to carry the matter through.

De Lionne requested time for reflection, and the great Condé fell sick of the gout. The Polish Queen, on her side, betrayed fresh symptoms of hesitation and uncertainty. The lately arranged substitution of Condé for d'Anguien seemed, now she looked at it closely, less attractive than at first. She believed she might have lived in full agreement with the son, whose respect and submission seemed highly probable. The thought of dealing with the father filled her with a vague sense of uneasiness. Then came another sudden change. Condé, cured as if by magic, reappeared at Versailles, and there conferred with a Polish nobleman recently arrived. This was Morsztyn, a former confidant of Lubomirski's, one of those many plenipotentiaries to the employment of whom the great faction leader had been so overprone. There was nothing of the wild Sarmatian about him. He wore the garb of France, talked its language as if it had been his own, and was thoroughly at home in the French Court, where, indeed, he counted many friends. He had been brought up in France. His dream was to end his days there, and he had come to choose his place, as it were, beforehand. His son, under the adopted title of the Comte de Chateauvillain, was ultimately to occupy a prominent position at Versailles. In his case, as, on a former occasion, in Sobieski's own, the success of the 'great affair' and the hopes of the French party in Poland were bound up with his personal desire to establish himself in the country of his predilection. His eloquence, no doubt,

proved persuasive; for, on the 8th of April 1667, Louis XIV. silenced the observations of his advisers, and dictated the following haughty lines to the Bishop of Béziers:—

‘After having learned the mind of my cousin (Condé), and thoroughly discussed and examined the subject in connection with the condition of the other affairs of this world, I have taken my final resolution, which has been to send my said cousin to Poland at the head of a body of from nine to ten thousand men, half of which I shall endeavour to compose of Frenchmen, and the other half of foreign troops; if, as I hope, I can get them from the Princes of the House of Brunswick, either by buying them, or borrowing them on payment of money, or else from the Elector of Brandenburg, if I can find means of persuading him to enter sincerely into my plan for the election. And I shall carry out what I have just said, whether the war with England continues, whether peace is made, and even if, after such a peace, I undertake other and still greater plans.’

I have already mentioned (page 50) the commentary added to this despatch by M. de Lionne, and dictated by his prudence and experience. It was to be fully justified in the near future. The Elector of Brandenburg refused to be tempted; he had his own views about Poland, quite irreconcilable with the restoration of Royal authority and the installation of a French dynasty in that country. The Princes of the House of Brunswick only made a pretence of concluding the bargain. The Vistula had no deep interest for them; they were far more inclined to look towards the Rhine, where events of greater interest to themselves, and to the whole of Germany, seemed close at hand. And, as a matter of fact, the summer of that year (1667) revealed the ulterior designs of the *Grand Roi*, and those ‘other plans’ to which his despatch had alluded. Turenne opened his campaign in Flanders, and Condé himself was shortly to follow his example in the Franche-Comté. The idea of making a desperate attempt on Warsaw, in addition to these enterprises, soon fell back into

its natural position. It had been nothing but a bit of demonstrative and theatrical by-play. A Royal messenger preceded Turenne's army, to request the Rhenish Princes and Electors to grant free passage for another army 'which His Majesty desired to send, without delay, to succour Poland against the Turks.' But not a soul, either in Poland or in Germany, was deceived, and the Emperor himself did not hesitate to strip his frontier of troops at a point where he felt there was no risk of serious danger.

The 'great affair' fell into the yawning chasm of hopeless failure. And at Warsaw, almost at the same moment, the mainspring of the long-drawn intrigue broke at last. The restless and passionate being whose hot eagerness would seem to have set the young French monarch's youthful soul aflame, passed suddenly away. The gallant-hearted Frenchwoman had lived her chequered life out more or less nobly. Her end was bravely met. Between her physician's hopeful words, the paroxysms of a 'choking catarrh,' and her confessor's religious exhortations Marie de Gonzague realised the inevitable, and faced it calmly. Her attendants had addressed her in the Latin tongue. In that tongue she answered, '*ergo moriendum*,' and turned her attention to her last arrangements.

She died, very peacefully, on the 9th of May 1667. 'Her confessor,' wrote Des Noyers, 'was still speaking to her when he became aware that she was gone.'

III

'*Et dissipate sunt omnes cogitationes ejus*,' cried a doubtful panegyrist—one day a courtier, a detractor the next—over the suddenly opened tomb. But he was wrong. '*Non omnis mortua!*' the indignant shade of the dead woman might fitly have replied. Soon, round the dark gulf into which, with the buried Queen herself, they had appeared to fall, the old illusions were struggling once again, like ghosts, vague perhaps, but stubborn, even as the unyielding will they

seemed to personify. In the first place, by a most grotesque and fantastic arrangement, the two princely candidates were summoned to follow the coffin in the funeral procession, and thus to move forward to the throne whereon her place stood empty. This idea, originally conceived by Des Noyers, was adopted by the Bishop of Béziers, and willingly supported by John-Casimir. But no time must be lost; for the King, though still disposed to abdicate, and full of talk, indeed, during the first days of his widowhood, of dying himself, as soon as that might be, was already beginning to enjoy life again. His wife had kept a sharp eye upon him in the matter of gallantry, and he began to make amends for his enforced continence, offering ceaseless and indiscriminate homage in every quarter, 'from the lady to the waiting-maid.' It must be acknowledged, as De Bonzy added, that he never went beyond conversation, for 'the worthy King was no more capable of active measures on these occasions, than on those of his Diets.' And Des Noyers goes so far as to chronicle certain reassuring facts, which I cannot venture to reproduce. The Royal favour was still chiefly bestowed on Mme. Denhof. This was an old *liaison* dating from 1661, and might become dangerous. Denhof, a very easy-going husband, was the head of the Austrian party; his wife, a German by birth, of the Von Bessen family, was also Austrian in sympathy; and the Emperor's minister was urgent with the sovereign as to the question of re-marriage. All these manœuvres might be cut short by using the excellent pretext of the funeral, which was to take place at Cracow, to justify the appearance of the French princes in that city.

Meanwhile, M. de Bonzy, ready as ever to sacrifice himself in the cause of 'duty,' undertook to gain over the feminine influence, which the King's fresh attentions were already rendering somewhat dangerous to the cause of France. And some weeks later he boasted his success, though discreetly silent concerning the means whereby he had attained it. But the spiteful tongues of Warsaw filled up the gap.

All sorts of details were current. The King, it was averred, had no sooner passed out of one door, before the Bishop entered Mme. Denhof's chamber by another. He left his attendants in the Church of St. John, whence a secret passage gave him access to the castle where the fair lady resided. Mlle. de Beaulieu (the bed-chamber woman whose name was sometimes assigned to Sobieski in the domestic correspondence) served as the Prelate's guide, and kept watch for him. A lampoon freely circulated in the capital, discussed, in terms of the coarsest, the question, always a thorny one in Poland, of the permanence of foreign embassies. 'What purpose did the Bishop of Béziers serve? To bring about the establishment of a despotic government and to set horns on every husband's forehead! Night after night women were seen leaving his palace with their aprons full of ducats.'

The Ambassador's success in gallantry was beginning to work him a mischief. But this mishap had nothing to do with the cold reception bestowed on his new proposal at Versailles, and even at Chantilly. Many things had happened since His Majesty took that bold resolution in the month of April. He was fully occupied, now, with his 'other plans,' and Condé had an army under his command. This, above all, decided the question, for it involved the fulfilment of the great warrior's dearest hopes. To him Poland had never been more than a makeshift. Kept at a distance, and condemned to inactivity by his recent disgrace, he had resolved to seek an issue there for his weariness—a chance of fortune and of glory, and a certainty of excitement, activity, and danger. But behold! he had a command; the hope of adding another leaf to his laurel crown, of dazzling and terrifying Europe yet once more, perhaps of even outdoing the great Turenne! What cared he for Poland now?

But what about the fate of French interests in Marysiénka's adopted country? This was, of course, a matter of some weight. But, after all, its importance was but moderate, by

no means exceeding that which Mazarin had formerly assigned to it. All unconsciously, the pupil went back to his old master's teaching, and the Bishop of Béziers learned, to his astonishment, that his duty would in future call him to support the candidature of the Duke of Neuburg.

The question of the passages of the Rhine was rising up out of oblivion once more.

IV

The Bishop of Béziers thought the moment inopportune, and he was not altogether in the wrong. Mazarin's plan had grown old-fashioned since the year 1657. Philip William, Count-Palatine of the Rhine, and Duke of Neuburg, would never have had any great chance of being accepted by the Poles. But the hope of forcing them, now, to choose a Prince who had nothing in common with Condé, who had earned no glory, was bent with age, needy, 'as great a beggar as a church rat' (the nickname given by Sobieski and Marysienka to the unconscious writer of the words), was absolute madness. Yet the Ambassador took good care not to resist his master's will. Private reasons of his own made him ready enough to submit to it. Neither did John-Casimir make much objection. He honestly desired to retire, and had reached such a pitch of weariness and disgust that the means of his departure mattered little to him. If it had not been for Marie de Gonzague, and her determination to ensure the success of one of the French candidates before her husband actually abdicated, he would have done it long before. The years 1667 and 1668 brought fresh disaster. The Diets broke up in confusion, there were Tartar raids, and domestic quarrels. In September 1668, the King took his final decision, offered his support to the new French candidate, negotiated for the most liberal payment obtainable for his services, extracted the promise of an income of 150,000 livres a year, charged on certain French abbeys, laid down his sceptre, wandered hither and thither, for another year,

throughout the kingdom he had willingly resigned, and, in 1669, took his way towards France.

On the 10th of October he reached Metz, where he was solemnly received. There was a service at the Cathedral, with a discourse by the Archbishop of Embrun, and a great banquet in the Archiepiscopal Palace, at which, according to the *Gazette de France*, the ladies appeared '*en état des plus lestes*.' At Meaux he met Condé and d'Anguien, and was conducted to Chantilly, where he spent four days, and whither De Lionne travelled, to bear him the King's compliments. The castle was crammed with guests. Every day there were hunting or fishing parties, Italian comedies and sumptuous suppers. On the 17th the King departed to Evreux, to take possession of the Abbey of St. Taurin, which had been set apart with six others, for his support. Only a month later he appeared at St. Germain; and that very day, after having paid his duty to the King, he arrived in Paris, and took up his residence at St. Germain des Prés, the most important fief belonging to his new domains.

The Abbey consisted, in those days, of a compact collection of buildings, shut in on the north, the east, and the south by the Rue de Colombier, the Rue St. Benoit, and the Rue Ste. Marguérite. The western side was bounded by the 'Pré aux Clercs.' What was the nature of the intercourse between the new Abbot and Holy Church? Did the ex-Jesuit, ex-Cardinal, and ex-King rank in the sacred hierarchy as layman or as priest? Did he say Mass? With shame I confess that I have not been able to discover any clear answer to these questions. On his arrival, he was clad in a riding dress 'with a sword by his side, and the Golden Fleece about his neck.' And in this garb he appeared at his installation ceremony within the Church of St. Germain des Prés. Some time later there was talk of his marriage with the widow of the Maréchal de l'Hôpital. If this alliance had been accomplished, Marie Mignot, the former washerwoman of Grenoble, would have been invested with royal robes. The gossip of the day, which, as a matter of

fact, paid but little heed to the august stranger, also gave out that he would marry his sister-in-law, the old Princess Palatine. But Marie Mignot held him firmly. The intercourse between them was close and constant ; and when the ex-King died, in 1672, her name was mentioned in his will, a fact on which the poet Coulange made the following comment :—

'Du feu Roi de Pologne,
Messieurs, que dites vous ?
Sans scrupule ni vergogne
Il vécut parmi nous.
Oui, mais son inconstance,
Moine, roi, cardinal,
Le fit venir en France,
Mourir à l'hôpital.'

No other panegyric of the monarch has been handed down to us.

While this melancholy close of a life which had seen some glorious days was drawing near, in France, French policy was receiving an ignominious check in Poland. The opposition had triumphed, and secured the election of a native candidate, a '*Piast*,' as the local phrase went ; and the successful candidate, Michael Wisniowiecki, lost no time in espousing an Arch-Duchess, Eleanora of Austria. The Bishop of Béziers seemed baffled and almost helpless. The French party had broken up and faded out of existence. And Sobieski ? And Marysieńka ? They too had withdrawn into the shade, and disappeared from sight. But how, and why ? That we shall learn from a fresh page of the lovers' story, another episode in that domestic struggle which kept step with the ceaseless turmoil in the tortuous politics of Poland.

V

Two years before the events I have just related—for we must go back as far as to the month of June, 1667—we find the couple apart again, and with no prospect, this time,

of an early reunion. Marie Sobieska, shortly to become a mother, was bent on going to Paris for her confinement. Sobieski was in despair, and his annoyance was increased by the political significance ascribed to his wife's journey, in every corner of Poland. It was quite clear that she was travelling to France to make her own bargain about the approaching election, and her husband was accused of conniving with her. The world is prone to such hasty judgments, and elementary processes of reasoning.

The Polish world was wrong. The simple fact was that Marysieńka was still as much bored in her adopted country as she had been during her first husband's lifetime, and her second partner wore himself out in vain efforts to amuse her, and turn her mind from this new plan.

'Even as in the deepest well,' he wrote, 'I have drowned all my fortune, all my happiness, and all my life within your person. Might not I too have tasted the delights of life in a more hospitable land than this? I was considering the idea. But one word from you fixed my fate here, and now I am poorer than the beggars stretching out their hands by the church-door, for when I lose you, I lose my all!'

He added advice and considerations calculated to demonstrate the folly of the expectations she founded on this change of abode. '*The Marigold*' (another nickname for M. de Bonzy) had never even mentioned the election to *Celadon*; and if *Astrea* flattered herself she would be warmly welcomed in Paris on account of that event, she would be bitterly disappointed. But upon this point Marysieńka was even better informed than her own husband. For some time past, her personal relations with the enterprising Bishop had been marked by increasing coldness. The gay churchman's fancy was wandering. The gossips of Warsaw suspected its bestowal, now on Mme. Paç, now on Mme. Morsztyn (a member of the great Scotch family of Gordon), and yet again, on Mme. Denhof. Marie Sobieska's dislike of Poland may well have been the result of wounded vanity and dis-

appointment. There was no actual rupture, as yet, between herself and her admirer. Just before her departure for France, indeed, there was a revival of the intimacy, which did not escape the sharp eyes of the scandalmongers. On her way to Dantzic, the fair lady spent some days at Warsaw, and Des Noyers, in his regular reports to Chantilly, makes the following references to this visit :—

‘ 17th June 1667.

‘ The *Grande Maréchale* has now been here for seven days, on her way to France. Since her arrival, I have never seen M. de Béziens anywhere but in her house, where he takes his meals every day.’

‘ 24th June 1667.

‘ The *Grande Maréchale* left Warsaw on the 18th of June, and slept on board the boat (which was to take her down the Vistula). M. de Béziens remained on board till midnight ; and on the 19th, at four o'clock in the morning, one of the Grand Chancellor's gentlemen met him on the road to the Monastery of the Camaldolese, and came and told his master that the Ambassador must have taken to flight, he was going so fast, with only one person on horseback with him, and was doubtless on his way to fight a duel. The Chancellor replied that when Frenchmen fought, they took off their doublets, but that the Ambassador “ *quitterait les chausses dans le combat qu'il allait faire.* ” Tisenhaus came and reported the matter to the King, who asked me whether I could not warn M. de Béziens that he was ruining the woman's reputation, and also affecting that of the King of France, seeing he was his Ambassador and Bishop. I excused myself on the plea that when, on a former occasion, I spoke to him on the subject, he took it very ill, although I had done so by the Queen's orders.’

Thus, the matter was common talk. Sobieski alone, like most husbands,—and more especially devoted husbands,—remained in blissful ignorance.

During her journey, Marysieńska left him five weeks with-

out any news at all. He had requested some of his friends to see her at Dantzic; she had her door shut in their faces. At last he was favoured with a note containing a few lines, but the whimsical lady gave him to understand that she had left Poland with no intention of returning thither. He could follow her to France, if so it pleased him. Then there was silence again, for two months more. This time the whole country was agog. And Sobieski, if we may believe his word, lay for a fortnight between life and death. Prayers were said in every church in Lemberg, where the distracted husband had taken to his bed, tapers were burnt to every saint in Paradise, and the sick man's confessor mourned over his pillow, crying, 'Why cannot I love my God as well?' Courier after courier was despatched, but the traveller made no sign. At the close of the ninth week, just as extreme unction was about to be administered, a miracle was wrought—such at least was the light in which the sufferer chose to view the incident. In a letter from the Bishop of Béziers, which the sick man had cast carelessly aside, appeared the news that *Astrea* was in Paris, and in perfect health.

Sobieski instantly recovered, made a vow to fast on bread and water for nine successive Saturdays, declared himself convinced that 'future centuries would speak of this intervention of Divine Providence in his favour,' and wrote to his beloved that she was 'an angel in human form.'

Then he rejoined the army, and for seventeen days his pen lay idle, though for a very different reason. The great Sobieski, the man the whole Christian world has honoured and acclaimed, appeared at last, and stood revealed. Surrounded in his camp at Podhorce, in Little Russia, by a cloud of Tartars and Cossacks, he resorted to a stratagem whereby, on two separate occasions, he was to save his army and his country. He pledged everything he possessed to obtain arms and raw material on credit; he emptied every granary on his own property; he collected 3000 foot-soldiers and 5000 horse; and then, deliberately, he allowed himself and his handful of troops to be hemmed in by the barbarian

hordes—too numerous for him to hold in check in open campaign, too ill provided and undisciplined to carry through a lengthened siege. The result was a complete rout of the besieging force, and a mighty clamour of relief, and gratitude, and joy throughout the country.

Those three weeks made Sobieski a new man. They wiped out every doubtful memory in his past, and all the dubious moments in his present, and marked him for honour and glory in the future. Till that moment he had been nothing but a lucky politician, an obscure soldier, who owed his command to his connection with a Court favourite, hardly judged by many men, suspected by all, and thoroughly unpopular. He now became the hero, the saviour, the indispensable servant of his country. His marriage, his elevation to power at Lubomirski's expense, and all the shady intrigues by which he had travelled, somewhat discredibly, up to the threshold of the sublime career now suddenly opening before him, faded away, as though they had never been.

Yet he was sad, and he told the reason of his melancholy, in a letter despatched the very instant his victory burst his prison doors and set him free:—

‘Neither this victory, nor even the salvation of my country, can give me joy, so long as I cannot see that which makes all my life, nor be where I have buried all my heart and all my thoughts’

The recipient of this letter was meanwhile setting up her residence in Paris, and on a splendid scale, Sobieski himself having desired her state should appear no less on this second visit than on her first. ‘We are no princes,’ he wrote, with a discreet reference to the pretensions of his predecessor Zamoyski, ‘but the offices God has bestowed on us have more weight, here in Poland, than ten princes of the Empire.’ Marysienka did not wait for a second intimation. But to counterbalance this satisfaction, she was soon obliged to recognise the truth of other statements which had reached her from the same source. As her husband had foreseen,

mortification and disappointment were to be her constant portion. There was no sign of the gracious reception she had counted on at Versailles, and not even the ghost of a '*civility*' from Chantilly. Before very long, indeed, a storm broke in that quarter—that unlucky business of the Marquisate of Époisses.

Madeleine de la Grange d'Arquien, Marie Sobieska's cousin-german, and heiress to the Marquisate in question, had married the Comte de Guitaut, first gentleman to Condé, and the companion of his exile. The Comtesse de Guitaut had just died, leaving a will by which the Prince—and, failing him, the Duc d'Anguien—were nominally appointed her heirs-general, but which, in reality, constituted a trust for the benefit of the Comte de Guitaut. The Burgundian custom (Époisses was a Burgundian property) prevented the Count from benefiting by his wife's direct bequest. The d'Arquien family forthwith raised a protest, and complained of insidious practices; and Marysieńka, we may be sure, joined in the chorus. She was even louder than the others in her indignation. Uproar was her natural element, and no one could excel her in the matter of complaint and noisy recrimination. The Prince, she vowed, was stripping her of her rightful property. He had placed a Jesuit about the person of the dying woman, to dictate the provisions of her will; and when the closing moment came, though horribly ill with gout, he had caused himself to be carried in a chair from Chantilly to Paris, to snatch away her inheritance.

Her ravings passed unheeded at Chantilly, and she had no better success at Versailles. She was, we must admit, as absurdly exacting with regard to the French Court as she had been unjust with respect to Condé. She desired to remain in France, and to be joined there by her husband, as soon as he had secured the election of the new King of Poland. 'Agreed,' came the reply. Sobieski should receive a Marshal's bâton, a landed property, by virtue of which he should become a duke and peer of France, and the blue

ribbon of the Order of the Holy Ghost. Over and above this, and at once, she demanded a *tabouret* for herself, the Lieutenancy of the Guard for her brother, the Captaincy of the Cent Suisses for her father, and the Marquisate of Époisses for her family in general. The King broke off negotiations. She immediately commanded *Celadon* to turn his back on the Bishop of Béziers and treat with the Emperor. But he had no time to obey her, for the next courier brought him quite different orders. He must make arrangements to join her as quickly as possible, for she should never make up her mind to leave France again. She loved her husband 'to madness,' but she could not continue to live in Poland, 'where she was constantly ill.'

'I understand you perfectly,' he replied; 'you love me, but you put me on one side of the scale, and the "Enchanted Palace" on the other, and this other is the heaviest by a thousand pounds, and yet another thousand.' And he added, 'My health has to suffer too. I was as little suited to the married state as water is to fire; I dreaded the ordeal, but I was very far from imagining that which has happened. In the last two years we have not lived two weeks together. And I am a man in the prime of life, robust and healthy. And I am a faithful husband!' And he added details of his sufferings and of certain circumstances which increased them. Under his very eyes he had the pleasing and yet tantalising spectacle of another newly-married couple. Mme. Jablonowska, wife of the Palatine of Russia, had followed her husband into camp. He saw them going to rest with the birds, not reappearing till midday, and lavishing mutual caresses even in the presence of other people. And he had another trial. The habits of the country and the duties of his position obliged him to spend many hours at table, glass in hand. Returning to his quarters, he would find himself assailed by some pretty wench, who backed her solicitations with hot and amorous glances. And the more determined sometimes went further yet. Then he would spit—the Polish sign of scorn and refusal

—commend his soul to God, and betake himself to bed, cursing the intruder, to snatch a few hours of slumber and forgetfulness, disturbed by tempting visions, on his lonely couch.

‘The night before last,’ he tells her, ‘your little picture which hangs above my bed got loose, and kept me company. I found it next morning on my breast, all crumpled. I must have crushed it to my heart while I slept. Kind little picture, far tenderer than its original!’

And he makes mention of a certain hermit in the Forest of Zloczow, who, after a year of abstinence and austerity, ended by taking advantage of every married woman in the neighbouring village.

This may have been a warning, and something, too, of a veiled threat. He was not living in a forest, and his ordinary fare did not consist of roots and cold water. Marysienka’s expenditure caused him anxiety as well, but to that he was ready to submit. He could always sell one of his landed properties—a proceeding not uncommon in the domestic economy of Poland—so long as she had all she needed, and maintained her health, and soon made him a happy father. But she contrived to torment him even in the matter of that tender hope.

It was sure to be a daughter.

Daughter or son, I care not, I shall love one as well as I should have loved the other, and if the mother will but love me a little, I shall be happy.

Then, all at once, she took it into her head to play the submissive wife. Where did he wish her to lie-in? To what extent did he desire she should reduce her household expenditure? ‘She had no more complete joy than that of obeying his slightest wishes.’ He held his peace, and she persisted, ‘Speak, what do you desire?’

And he replied, ‘That we should live together.’

Towards the close of the year she bore a son, and he burst into a transport of delight and simple pride—happier and prouder, far, than after his triumph at Podhaŕce, and em-

boldened to answer Marysienka in quite a new tone, with a masterful ring about it.

'What did I tell you, Madam, when you were pleased to find fault with me, because our marriage remained barren so long? "It is no fault of mine," you would repeat, "I have borne children!" You have indeed, but what children? Unwelcome fruits that would not ripen! Now you have one that is full of sap and vigour. Learn, my dear soul, to know me better.'

The good news doubled his own boldness and activity. He gallantly surmounted the pecuniary embarrassments consequent on his last effort for the salvation of his country, and on his wife's extravagance, and determined to appear at the Warsaw Diet in quite unusual splendour. Every eye was sure to be turned on the victor of Podhaice, and he knew the national weakness for splendid scenic effect. Therefore, behind his coach, drawn by six horses, he would have sixty guards, dressed in blue laced with silver, five-and-twenty dragoons, one hundred Hungarian *Heiduques*, one hundred Janissaries, one hundred Tartars, one hundred Wallachians, Hussars with spreading eagles' wings, and *Pancerni* in gilt cuirasses, a crowd of officers, native and foreign, without reckoning one thousand pages, footmen and '*canaille*.' Never would any Hetman have appeared in such state. He must rouse the popular imagination, and assert his right to the overwhelming position he might henceforth claim. Thus, if he could not obtain the hoped-for share in the coming election, he would, at all events, gain some compensation for his sacrifices for the public welfare. Hero though he was, he never failed to calculate, and could not cast off his trick of reckoning. And besides, the King of Poland himself had suggested his providing himself with a strong escort. This might be necessary for the protection of M. de Bonzy, whose various enterprises, electoral and amorous, had ended by stirring up public feeling against their author. The *Szlachta* (nobility) vowed they would kill him if he did not leave the country.

To this depth had the representative of French interests fallen !

But Marysieńka had other views regarding the Diet. Above all things, her husband must endeavour to obtain some position in the country for the Chevalier d'Arquien. Did this mean that she herself was thinking of returning to Poland? Surely not—for in the same breath she declared herself deeply engaged in efforts to obtain a fitting establishment for her husband near the 'Enchanted Palace.' It is true that she also expressed some anxiety concerning the *wielka buława*—the baton of supreme command which had been promised to *Orondatus*. As yet, he only held the position of Field Hetman (*Polny Hetman*). Let him take care he was not fooled about this matter. As for the election, that was quite a secondary affair. Yet she condescended to give him instructions on this subject too. 'Before closing the business for the Duc d'Anguien'—she was still unaware that this candidate was no longer in question—'you must claim justice, and have justice done, to the whole of your family, which M. le Prince (Condé) has always desired to ruin.'

M. d'Arquien, Marysieńka's father, had, indeed, been brought to ruin by the expensive lawsuits in which he was still engaged concerning the Marquisate of Époisses. And this fact had prevented him from giving his daughter her dowry. After a very confused explanation touching this point of domestic law and interest, Marysieńka thus concludes: 'This is a matter which affects you, because I should always have a larger share than the others.' (Obedient to the lessons of her 'good mistress,' she was playing for her own hand.) 'But if the interests of my family were the only ones concerned, I am persuaded that, for love of your own glory and honour, and for the love you bear me, you will never declare yourself in favour of a Prince who usurps the property of your family, and therefore your own, unless you hear from me that I am satisfied. And for this purpose, you must write the letter' which I send you on this

subject to *M. l'Ambassadeur*. I tell *M. l'Ambassadeur* that, when a king is chosen after the abdication, you will not be for the Prince, unless you have heard from me that what is our own has been restored to us.'

And finally, *Orondatus* is ordered to obtain letters of naturalisation from the Diet for the baby James—the name she had given the newly-born child; while, in a postscript added to the letter, M. d'Arquien lays stress on the urgent necessity of having the boy naturalised in France. For Marysienka's father, too, had a voice and part in the domestic discussion, which was dragging its length backwards and forwards between one end of Europe and the other. He had interfered, on a previous occasion, with regard to certain symptoms of curiosity which Sobieski had ventured to display as to the details of his wife's residence in Paris, and which her father considered impertinent and indiscreet. Houghty toighty! was she to shut herself up in a convent? She would have no personal objection. But he could not treat a well-conducted Frenchwoman as if she were an Italian or a Spaniard!

This time Sobieski lost his temper. The honour of his country was called in question.

'Gently, my good father-in-law! There is no lack here of honest Polish women, who know nothing of Spanish and Italian habits, but who are willing enough to let their husbands know whither they go, and what they do, wherever they may be! I am still left in ignorance as to the place where the mother of my child lay-in. I do not know whether she was brought to bed in a palace or a tavern. Yet she herself has not hesitated to concern herself with my actions, and that in a most unpleasant manner. Has she not just forbidden one of her waiting-women to enter my house, saying she is convinced I was taking advantage of her absence to live with this servant wench? I! whose over-fidelity to my conjugal vow—the cause of a torture which has grown far too long—has all Poland for its witness!'

Under the sharp terms of this protest, a change of feeling may easily be read. The contest was growing bitter, and *Orondatus'* melancholy was changing to exasperation. Soon his letters to Marysieńka herself told the same story. Home happiness was certainly not for him. He had no thought, now, of rejoining her in Paris, where, indeed, she did not seem to care to receive him, and he despaired of ever seeing her in Poland again. Her horror of leaving France would be too much for her.

'Live then in that far country, oh! my only love! live there in happiness and joy, since fate has willed that the unhappy *Sylvander* must weary his *Astrea*, and that, after having suffered the most cruel torments, he must die, crowned in the eyes of future generations, with the glory of having been, amongst all men, past and future, *le plus passionné amant*' (these words are written in French in the original letter), 'and the tenderest of husbands.'

We should do wrong, no doubt, to take these declarations literally. We must make allowance not only for a large amount of conventional exaggeration, and for a style of expression inspired by Scudéry, but also for the Slavonic temperament, and for the naturally excessive, changeable, and impressionable character of feeling and speech peculiar to that nationality.

On March 1st, 1668, the pompous entry of the Hetman and his numerous train took place, and produced its intended effect at Warsaw. He received a glowing welcome. The bâton of supreme command was shortly bestowed, and the man who had lately appeared so distracted was soon writing a fresh letter to Paris, a letter with no sign or symptom of his recent misery, full of jokes, humorous sallies, and coarse hints, and fair plans for future happiness. The King was about to abdicate. So much the better! As soon as that was done, *the powder*—that was Sobieski—would find its way to *the nosegay*—that was Marysieńka. He had been sounded as to the election, and had replied that he would only treat directly with the King of France, and that

his wife was in charge of all such arrangements. She might claim much, for he was in a position to demand great things. He was the 'arbiter of the situation.' Therefore she must remember these points and stand firm—'*Mulet*, one of M. d'Arquien's properties, encumbered with debts, which must be cleared off—100,000 crowns, a house in Paris, some property in France, an Abbey for the Chevalier d'Arquien, and *the rest*.' *The rest* stands for the compensation to be granted for the offices shortly to be resigned by the lately appointed Crown Hetman. For he had made up his mind, at last, to quit his own country, and seek his happiness under French skies, and in Marysienka's arms. 'He has heard,' he writes, 'that she has spoken of him, in a letter to the Palatine of Russia, as *a gallows bird*; he will take his own vengeance for the insult.' How? The modest editor of the Sobieski correspondence has left us no indication save a row of stars. . . . And let her not dare to make his little James a soft baby. She should soon, he undertook, have a daughter, whom she could turn into a French doll if so she fancied, but the son must grow up a hardy Pole. Let her leave him to tug at his nurse, and tear her hair out, after his own sweet will.

The hero has faded out of sight. The simple lover, the good-natured and somewhat vulgar-minded husband has taken his place, and with him has returned the man of politics, in all his cynical-mindedness and greed of gain. This marks the true character of the man, and the character, as well, of the whole of that ill-fated Polish aristocracy, which deserves everything, good and evil, laid to its charge, seeing it is responsible both for the glory and the ruin of its country. Sobieski was ever thus, oscillating between the sublimest heights and the most pitiful depths, startling us into admiration, and then putting us to utter confusion.

The Diet which had opened so brilliantly was to bring him many disappointments. He soon found himself face to face with budding jealousies and former rivalries, all equally stirred by his overweening pretensions. His old enemies in

the Paç family, and the Wisniowiecki, who were to triumph over him on the morrow, checkmated all his endeavours, and we soon see him fallen even lower than before, cast down, discouraged, and condescending to traffic of so base a kind, that his very ambition lost its footing, and was brought to shame. He writes to his wife that she must make terms with the King of France; but that he must have money, and she must accept nothing else. Landed properties, a marshal's bâton, a peerage, and the blue ribbon are all fine enough in their way, but for him the time for such things has gone by. He feels himself broken down in health and spirits and fortune. His sole desire is to find his way to some quiet corner, and there end his life.¹ And at the same moment he writes another letter (in French), which might well have emanated from the back shop of some dealer in ancient curiosities:—

‘To His Excellency the Ambassador
of France.

‘*The Marigold* (Bonzy) has not communicated anything he has received by his courier to *the Phoenix* (Sobieski), who is dying of impatience to know what has been decided. . . . There is still time enough for treating with *the Palm* (Neuburg), but no time must be lost with regard to *the Eagle* (Louis XIV.) before the departure of *the Nightingale* (Marie Sobieska), to whose hands *the Phoenix* has committed all his interests. Otherwise we must look for some *Thorn* (the Tsar of Muscovy) which, instead of scratching us, may be transplanted and bear good fruit, or else some *Duck* (the Emperor), which may lay us golden eggs.’

¹ These letters from Sobieski, some of which express a desire to be appointed a Marshal of France, while others bear witness to his indifference upon the subject, were all written in April 1668 (Helcel Collection. 1st part, 134-142). This fact convinces me that he had not received the bâton in 1666, as M. Korzon affirms (*Fortunes of Sobieski*, p. 469). The patent, a copy of which was discovered by M. Korzon in the Lemberg Library, was only drawn up to be used in case of the success of a negotiation which completely failed.

And meanwhile, the private love quarrel continued, each successive incident doing its part towards wearing out the man's sturdy though ill-regulated soul, and adding to the disorder into which, with him, the whole French party in Poland was rapidly falling.

Sobieski and every one about him felt the influence of the form of government peculiar to his country, and indeed of the very air they breathed. It was an atmosphere of licence, heavy with dangerous and intoxicating perfumes, instinct with poison, the temptation of which no man could withstand. These Polish nobles, with their careless independence and haughty pride—the pride of citizens who had called a second Roman Republic into life, who swayed a shadowy sovereign and a herd of slavish serfs, mere beasts of burden—were altogether too splendid, too easy-going for this work-a-day world.

And the heady and uncertain influences which were perpetually floating out of the Parisian atmosphere into this other one, already so charged with elements of peril, were not calculated to guide and support the hero on his way. *Astrea* herself seemed sorely out of her element on the banks of the Seine. She appears to have failed to tempt the King into any serious negotiation with regard to the Polish crown. The discussion between herself and the court at Versailles was not reopened. And this condition of things resulted as much from her excessive pretensions as from the changed attitude of the Bishop of Béziers, and the news transmitted by him to France. The air of Poland would seem to have turned his head as well as others. He flitted hither and thither, after fresh objects and new adventures, which threatened the safety of the interests committed to his care. At this particular moment he was under the impression he had done these interests real service by inducing the Duke of Neuburg's envoy to sign a treaty, containing no mention whatsoever either of *Marysieńka* or of her husband, but simply a reference to 'the great merit, virtue, and fine qualities of Mme. Denhof,' and the rewards,

both titular and financial, to which she and her husband would be entitled, in return for their support at the next election.

Bonzy had forgotten his absent fair, and quite overlooked her existence. Her rival had won the day, and, being greatly her superior in political gifts, she held the fascinating prelate fast, and instead of allowing him to lead and drive her whither he would, guided him wherever her own ambition, and the interests of the German party, called her.

And so the storm of disaster gathered threateningly.

Marysieńka shrewdly suspected it, and wild with rage at her impotence either to avoid defeat or avenge it, she poured out her fury upon her husband, who was suddenly informed that she was 'growing accustomed to live without him, and to take no further care, either for his interests or his pleasures.'

'Your love for me is dead, that much is clear,' he replies, and the sad admission is followed by a comically expressive exclamation: 'What a pity! I am in such splendid health just now!' Then forthwith, by sharp transition, he passes into tragedy. There is to be war with the Turks immediately. So much the better, the end will come all the more quickly! He is resolved to die! But the very next courier brings him an unexpected gift—yet another bracelet woven out of the daintiest tresses by an exquisite hand—and with it a whole volume of tender effusions. Immediately his interest in life revives. He fancies the matter of the *tabouret* may be in more hopeful case. Not at all; the bracelet and the tender phrases had only been sent to pave the way for a fresh request for money. He grows angry, and she flies into a passion.

'You leave me in poverty, because I have given up all my lands to you!

'Your lands? Zamoyski's family might very well have kept them, for all they bring in! But what matter whether the land be yours or mine? I would give you my last shirt, only I am not sure whether I shall have one to my back before so very long! Cossacks and Tartars have stripped

me of all I have. Quite lately I had to send the Pasha of Silistria all the silver plate remaining to me, even my basin, *and I have to use a glass to wash myself.*

But she checks his attempts at apology by one of those changes of attack peculiar to feminine controversy.

'If you could see the bottom of my heart, you would have to acknowledge that your love, compared with mine, is a very imperfect thing.'

His soul rises in rebellion.

'Your love indeed! When we were together, you vowed you prayed God night and morning to preserve my affection to you, but you never did anything yourself to help in the matter. Always reproaches, always complaints! Always my fault if the smallest thing happened to annoy you. Never a moment of good temper, never the slightest sign of kindness! Once only—for I have the most exact of memories for your slightest action and your every word—yes! once only, you had pity on me! I was very much annoyed with the Court, and you had been increasing my distress by contradicting me, in your usual fashion. I could bear it no longer, and I threw myself down, and began to weep like a child. You were touched, and your caresses soon turned my sorrow into joy. But that day has known no morrow, and your usual manner of behaviour—how different, alas!—is a matter of common knowledge. In my company you are always gloomy and morose, and no one can induce you to speak a word. The moment you leave my side, your speech and merriment return. The first days of our marriage were perfect bliss, but before many months were out, I envied your dog—you treated him far better than you treated me!'

This chapter of history was followed by another, in a philosophic vein, the elements of which the unlucky husband drew from 'the love affairs of the King of France with Mlle. de la Vallière,' the story of which had travelled as far as Poland. It was some consolation to him to observe that the little god who had caused him so much suffering wielded the

same power, even within the stately walls of the *Enchanted Palace*, and worked the selfsame mischief there. Yet, *Celadon* could not imagine that he himself was on a footing of equality with his Royal comrade in misfortune. The King's mistress, doubtless, treated him with rather more consideration, and would hardly add to the insult of describing him as a *gallows bird* by calling him *scullion* to his face!

For so far had the quarrel gone, that the parties had taken to calling each other names.

To wipe out such a memory, Sobieski betook himself to reading some former letters from the fair one, which he always carried about, stitched into his scapulary. In one of these she swore she would never leave him—not even to drink medicinal waters in a foreign land. ‘Away from him, the waters would change into poisons.’ And this led him to meditate on the instability of human happiness. He plunged deeper and deeper into his dreams of renunciation and indifference to worldly things. But an imperious missive from Marysieńka called him back to the question of the *tabouret*, the object of a ceaseless longing, which seemed doomed never to know gratification. And his mobile, easily influenced mind soon shared her passionate eagerness over this trivial grievance. ‘In good truth, the wife of a French pastrycook was better treated at Warsaw.’ Then emotion got the upper hand again. A whole year, he said, had passed away since she had left him alone at Jaworów. What had he done to deserve such treatment? ‘In this country, a man who kills a nobleman is given a year’s imprisonment. I have begotten one, and I have received the same punishment, and even worse.’ He sends a kiss to the faithless one, ‘Oh! not on the lips!’ he did not venture so much, even in fancy, remembering too well how often, during the last months they had spent together, the lips he adored had refused to meet his own. How would it be now, changed as he felt he was, aged by sorrow, and already grey-headed?

Of a sudden a great joy burst upon him, to be swiftly

followed by disappointment. *Astrea* spoke of returning to him, but on her own conditions—she would have no more children. That was the climax. A storm of passion shook him.

‘What! you bore three to *the other*, and you would gladly have borne more! If you intended to change your mind on that point, when you changed your husband, I should have been warned before,—yes, two whole years before, on that night when, you may perhaps remember, my future and my misery were decided—that night when, to possess you, I risked far more than my life, my very honour. I would have left you then, but you held me back, your arms about me made me a prison, so mighty and so sweet that I could not depart. Come! a truce to your play-acting. Speak out frankly! What is it that has given you a dislike to me?’

She quibbled as usual.

‘Dislike you! good God! But every soul here is astounded at the hurry I am in to get back to you, in spite of my health, which is scarcely recovered, and my unfinished cure!’

He answered harshly, ‘I snap my fingers at your friends in Paris and at what they think! They judge, apparently, according to the fashions of their own country, where every married woman has a lover, and every husband takes a mistress. I am a Pole, and our little James belongs to Poland too; there is no need to naturalise him here. In what country, Madam, do you claim citizenship?’

Her sharp wit told her she had gone too far. There was no hope, evidently, of obtaining the *tabouret*, and so she decided finally to be a Pole. She began to make serious preparations for departure, and set about ensuring a welcome on her arrival. By each post she sent wonderful coaxing letters, full of deprecation and apology. She was an unhappy woman indeed, whose words were misunderstood, and whose tenderness was thus suspected. Ah! if he could only read her heart, if he could only hear her saying her prayers at night, she actually made the mistake sometimes of saying

'M. le Maréchal' instead of 'Our Lord.' But he stood on his guard. 'Is it my person, or my position, which thus disturbs your devotions?'¹

Here I must make a digression.

Ill treated, as everybody will admit Marysieńka's husband to have been, and sorely tried in his married life, he has, at all events, gained the advantage of universal pity for his misfortune. In every school where the chronology of the Polish reigns is still taught, the scholars learn to pity, as well as to admire, the admirable husband, and to blame, and even curse, the wicked wife. It may be that we have all fallen into some exaggeration,—for the husband himself may possibly have exaggerated his own perfect resemblance to the hermit of the forest of Zloczow—before his fall. Amongst the Des Noyers Papers, I came upon copies of three letters to a Polish gentleman, written in July and August, 1669, by Mlle. de Villeneuve. This young lady had been maid-of-honour to Marie de Gonzague. After the Queen's death she returned to France—an event referred to by Mme. Chatrier, the wife of a member of Condé's household, in the following terms:—

'Mlle. de Villeneuve is already fain to regret Poland . . . and truly there is some reason for it, for I do not think that in this country a person of her appearance will ever find men to fall passionately in love with her, nor means of laying up 25,000 francs within five years!'

There is no indication as to the person for whom the letters to which I have referred were intended. For a very considerable period, Des Noyers acted as Marie Sobieska's confidant and counsellor; he supplied her with money, and deciphered her secret correspondence. Her correspondence

¹ Very few of Marysieńka's letters, written during this period, have come down to us; but her husband had such a constant habit of quoting both her sentiments, and her very words, in his own epistles, that we are enabled to reconstitute her effusions almost wholly. I have endeavoured to do this in the present dialogue and those which follow; the sentences marked with inverted commas are always textual quotations.

with the Bishop of Béziers passed through his hands, and traces of it remain amongst his papers. This fact gives rise to a somewhat strong presumption. Marysienka boasted, at a certain moment, that she possessed documents which gave her a hold over her husband. May not these have been the documents in question?

I beseech my Polish readers not to cry sacrilege upon me. I am by no means set upon this hypothesis; and if they prefer to believe their hero, and mine, took no reprisals of any kind, I am quite willing they should do so. But, putting that question aside, Mlle. de Villeneuve's epistles are so entertaining, and give so interesting a sketch of the cosmopolitan maid-of-honour—a sketch well worthy of its place in the gallery of seventeenth century ladies—that I cannot but give way to the temptation of laying some specimens before my readers.

Marie de Gonzague's former attendant, who refers to herself sometimes as *Mabille* (I know not if this was in honour of the famous Countess de Bellême, an eleventh century heroine who left a far from pleasing memory behind her), and sometimes as *St. Dorothy* (this pseudonym puzzles me still more), addresses her letters to a friend left behind her in Poland, whom she calls *St. Augustine* or *the Undertaker*. These names are the only veiled expressions used by her. She speaks of the sorrow it has been to her to leave him, and of her desire to obtain a pension from the King of Poland, and adds she only awaits a word from him, to take her way back to Warsaw. She has perfectly understood his fear of the remark to which her presence in that town might give rise, but she recalls him to a more healthy view of the situation. 'Remember, my very dear father, that it would not be a glory for you, because *Mabille* is not beautiful; but if she were beautiful, it could be nothing but an advantage to you, for kings have mistresses, and great nobles have them too. I know of two marshals of France, each sixty years old, who have mistresses, and give them houses and incomes, and go and see them every day.

In fact, those who have no love affairs are fools and brutes, who have no sentiment, and little-minded men, who allow themselves to be ruled by their wives, and are afraid of them. And it seems that *the Undertaker* is above all danger of that kind, for his wife owes him everything, and *St. Augustine* is a man of strong mind.'

My readers will observe that the description of *the Undertaker's* wife is quite applicable to Marie Sobieska. I quote again—

'Certain people in France have said to *Mabille*, 'We are told, Mademoiselle, that *the Undertaker* loves you, and that you have been his mistress.' *St. Dorothy* has replied with great humility that such good fortune as this had not been bestowed upon her.' The letter ends with respects sent to *St. Augustine*, and a remembrance of the 'walks in the Castle Gallery.' 'This,' explains Des Noyers, 'was a place to which she used to go at night, dressed in (an illegible word) when *the Undertaker* was lodged in the house of (name illegible).'

The second letter, dated the next day, is full of expressions of distress. *St. Dorothy* has received her formal dismissal from *St. Augustine*. A story had gained currency in Poland that she was about to marry a Count Zamoyski, whom the King (Louis XIV.) had just released from prison, whither his debts had brought him. The lady prays the 'thunder may fall on her,' and 'Hell engulf her,' if the story be true. Zamoyski had, indeed, sought her hand, and she would have bettered her position by accepting this proposal, 'which would have given her means of climbing back to the place from which she had descended,' but 'for that purpose she must have had a heart to offer him.' And she had left her heart in Poland. 'I do not think that he, or any other, will ever possess me. I believe the best thing I can do is to become a nun, and spend the rest of my life sighing for him I love.'

Meanwhile she betakes herself to Fontainebleau, and there hides her sorrow, spending her days in converse with

the oaks, to whom she confides her love-lorn state, and the rocks, of which she makes fountains of water, until another post ends her misery, and elicits a third letter overflowing with joy. *St. Augustine* has changed his mind, and she is to go back to Poland.

I do not claim that these letters prove Sobieski's guilt, nor that Marie Sobieska was justified in all the accusations she was to bring against her husband at a later date. In any case, the verdict of posterity is more than half just. She will always remain the chief culprit, for she was the first to sin. In the most audacious and shameless fashion, without even the excuse of an overmastering temptation, simply out of ambition and love of intrigue, she first soiled her own fireside by an adulterous intercourse, and then played her guilty partner false with a succession of stealthy rivals.

Even her journey to Paris was spurred by a shameful jealousy. The Comte de Mailly, brother of Mme. Paç, had gone thither before her, to checkmate her claims, and put forward those of his own family. She was doubly defeated. But Sobieski was doubly justified—if not in desiring her return, at all events in feeling her absence was an insult.

VI

Marysienka's return to Poland, in October 1668, was dreary enough. At the last moment, *Celadon*, unable to restrain himself, left Warsaw—where King John-Casimir's abdication had become an established fact—and hastened to Dantzic, to meet *Astrea*. He had hoped for a ray of sunshine, but he was greeted by an angry shower. Marysienka showed him a lowering, gloomy countenance, which never brightened, except when the word France was spoken in her presence. And she was talking once more of returning thither. A short time prior to her departure, she had formed fresh ties and espoused new

ideas. She had at last become convinced that neither Condé nor d'Anguien had any hope of success. She would have nothing to do with Neuburg; he was '*a church rat*,' and behind him she seemed to see the robes of a traitor bishop, and the hated skirts of Mme. Paç and Mme. Denhof fluttering in the breeze. She had looked about for a fresh candidate, and had fixed her choice upon the Duc d'Orléans. She had merely returned to Poland, so it seemed, to secure adherents to his cause, and this done, she proposed to betake herself to Paris, to make a certainty of his success in France.

Sobieski objected loudly. So far as Neuburg was concerned, he agreed fully with his wife. Nobody in Poland would have anything to do with him. And when the Elector of Brandenburg sent an agent to plead his cause, he and his wife together gave him a polite dismissal. But the Duc d'Orléans was an absolute impossibility, France would never consent. In vain did he argue, it was sheer waste of breath. Marysienka had other reasons, concerning which she held her peace, for meeting her husband in a different spirit from that which her letters had given him reason to expect, and on which, indeed, she herself had reckoned. These reasons were in no way connected with the investigation of the Duc d'Orléans's chances of the succession to the Polish throne. A further disappointment, which had soured her temper afresh, and scattered all her good resolutions to the winds, had been superadded to the humiliations she had endured in Paris. When she decided to leave the neighbourhood of the *Enchanted Palace*, she had flattered herself she was at all events to travel towards a certain revenge. Beaten and humiliated as she had been in France, by the scorn of its haughty sovereign, she had promised herself to retaliate on the King's Ambassador, and on the double battlefield of love and politics to win a simultaneous triumph over the twin rivals who had ventured to dispute her will. But just before her departure, these plans had all been overthrown by news

from Warsaw. She was not to find the Bishop of Béziers awaiting her. The storm which had long been growling had burst over the rash prelate's head at last. He had been forced to flee before the public wrath. His reliance on the support the Denhofs were to afford him had been too confident. John-Casimir was no longer king; his favourite's influence had dropped away, and De Bonzy must e'en return to France. For a moment, Marysieńka had dared to think she might meet him on her road. But Sobieski, very unexpectedly, had taken upon himself to frustrate all such hopes and plans. She felt he was warned at last—though not a word of it appeared in any of his letters—and if not convinced (that, I believe, he never was to be), set on his guard, at any rate. Des Noyers, after references (in June) to a correspondence between De Bonzy and Marie Sobieska 'to settle the road she was to take on her return, and arrange a meeting,' and to a manœuvre of Sobieski's to prevent this meeting, adds (in September)—

'The Grand Marshal betrays great joy, because she (his wife) has had no meeting with the Bishop of Béziers.'

Marysieńka's discomfiture was complete. There was no faithless lover for her to recover—no rival to humiliate,—nothing for her to do in her husband's country. But at the same time, French policy in Poland appeared in as evil a case as hers. One king had just resigned, the election of another was at hand, and France seemed bereft of any chance of success in the coming fray. The French candidate was to appear without partisans, and the French party without a leader.

Matters were not destined to reach quite so terrible a pass. France was to attempt to recover her position, and the Bishop of Béziers himself was to endeavour to rally his followers to a fresh watchword. Nevertheless, the battle was lost before it was begun. I have already referred to the ultimate result of the struggle. I will now recount its various incidents. They, too, form part and parcel of Marysieńka's life-story.

CHAPTER VIII

MARYSIENKA'S DIPLOMACY

- i. The Bishop of Béziers returns to Paris—Unexpected development in French policy—Double-barrelled diplomacy—Official and semi-official candidates—Neuburg and Condé—Sobieski looks coldly on the plan—Marysienka takes the bait—Diplomatic passage at arms—The Abbé Courtois—Fresh cause for discontent—The elder Mdlle. d'Arquien—Virgin and Martyr—Rupture of negotiations.
- ii. The Diet—Marysienka's illness—Sobieski's despair—Stormy scene—Condé beaten—The Bishop of Béziers reappears—Nocturnal meetings—Neuburg or Lorraine—The *Piast*.
- iii. The decisive sitting—Divine intervention—The *Piast* acclaimed—Illusions and disappointments—Election of Michael Wisniowiecki.
- iv. Sobieski's rage—The 'ape' shall not be crowned!—Marysienka's practical wisdom—Coquettish wiles—The ambassador's new correspondent—Mme. Morsztyn—At Cracow—*Roi Galant* and short-sighted husband—Sobieski unappeased—A plot—Summons to France—The Chevalier d'Arquien—A cold reception—Louis XIV. bears a grudge—A side entrance—The Hôtel de Longueville—The Comte de St. Paul—The Duchesse de Longueville—The new candidate's emissaries—The Abbé de Paulmier—Marysienka at Dantzic—The passage of the Rubicon—The thunder-clap—Final close of the candidature.
- v. Marysienka in Paris once more—Another domestic quarrel—Marysienka's ultimatum—Divorce—Her return—Man and wife once more—Unpleasant memories—The Abbé de Paulmier again.
- vi. Another conspiracy—A fresh appeal to France—Death of the Duc de Longueville—Fresh quarrels between husband and wife—An unkept appointment—Sobieski's resolve—*Celadon* disappears—The hero—The victory of Chocim—Death of King Michael—A dazzling prospect.

I

THE Bishop of Béziers was no fool. Once he had left Warsaw, and the illusions nursed by the smiles of a fallen favourite, behind him, he promptly came to the conclusion that in love and in diplomacy alike, he had followed the

wrong scent. And he easily induced the King of France to share his conviction. There was no doubt that the candidature of the Duke of Neuburg, opposed as it was by the Sobieskis, the Paç, and the Radziwills, was doomed to certain failure. The Diet, convoked to elect the new king, was to meet in May 1669. M. de Bonzy pledged himself to re-appear before it, and defend French interests successfully; but he must have another programme and a different candidate. The new instructions issued to him on October 15th, 1668, were intended to fulfil these conditions, and, at the same time, to save appearances. They are a curious, though somewhat inglorious, monument of diplomatic duplicity. Certain engagements had been entered into with the Duke of Neuburg, and, what was still more serious, with the Emperor, who, for that amongst other reasons, had not taken any part in the Spanish war. These engagements could not be broken without serious inconvenience. But the Spanish war had come to an end with the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle (2nd May 1668); Condé was idle once more, and free, therefore, to recall the memory of his former ambitions. The Poles seemed 'to lean towards him of their own free will,' they should not be denied, and the Bishop of Béziers was to do his utmost, in an unofficial manner, to give them satisfaction.

But who was to be used, in Poland itself, as the pivot of this unexpected development? Not the Denhofs, that much was certain! Sobieski and his wife were suggested, and the ambassador, as may be imagined, made no objection to the change. But in that case, the French Government must expect the Grand Marshal, and more especially his partner, to increase their demands. Their petition had only lately been dismissed, and somewhat roughly too; if they were now invited to give their services to bolster up a somewhat shady enterprise, they were sure to rate the sacrifice of their spites and scruples at a heavy premium. With an eye therefore, to this expected rise in Sobieski's pretensions, the French king's offer was increased. To the

endowments previously agreed on—the Marshal's bâton, the Duchy, and the Blue Ribbon, the king was ready to add a residence in Paris, and the promise of an abbey for the Chevalier d'Arquien, instead of the coveted lieutenancy of the *Gardes-du-Corps*, 'the king never admitting any but the most experienced officers to places of this kind.' As for the elder d'Arquien, whom it was also necessary to satisfy, 'if he found himself absolutely unable to purchase the Captaincy of the Swiss Guard, the present holder of that office, the Comte de Vardes, must be requested to resign.' But this concession was only to be made 'in the very last extremity.'

In spite of the Comte de Vardes's loss of reputation in the matter of the affairs of the Comte de Guiche—touching which he had proved himself a traitor—the king still preferred him to Marysieńka's father. This gentleman had a very vile, and, unfortunately, a well-earned reputation. A debauchee, in spite of his age, as quarrelsome as knavish, his whole time was spent in piling up debts and law-suits, in adding to the number of his enemies, and the weight of his infirmities.

Finally, a financial matter called for arrangement. One of the Duke of Neuburg's agents had, independently of the Bishop of Béziers, promised Sobieski a sum of six hundred and eighty thousand livres, eighty thousand of which were to be applied to buying back the *starosty* of Puck from the town of Dantzic, and three hundred thousand to the purchase of a landed property in France. A claim was sure to be put forward in connection with this promise. The French king declared himself ready to undertake the Duke of Neuburg's responsibility and pay the debt.

A courier bearing these proposals met the Sobieskis in November 1668, at Warsaw, where the Diet, called the *Diet of Convocation*, which preceded and paved the way for the *Diet of Election*, was in session. The Grand Marshal made a wry face. This double-barrelled plan had no charms for him. At a sitting of the Diet, which took place just

after the courier's arrival, the Condé candidature was discussed, and appeared by no means so popular as people chose to think it in France. Certain members of the Diet suggested the administration of an oath, by which every one should swear *not to allow himself to be bought*. This was a novelty, but the parliamentary history of many countries has been stained by some such shameful termination, the outcome of identical phenomena of moral degradation. No man dared raise his voice in protest, and the motion was passed. Then a proposal for the exclusion of all candidates guilty of bribery was mooted, and the name of Condé was mentioned. It was a sort of *preliminary question*. Sobieski, realising from what quarter the wind blew, was on the point of crying *excludatur* with the rest, but a note from Marysieńka stopped him.

‘If you do that, you will find me in my coffin when you come home!’

She had swallowed the Versailles bait. Above all things, the residence in Paris tempted her. She had lately taken a whim to acquire the Palace in Warsaw, which King John-Casimir had not yet thought fit to leave. He seems to have actually enjoyed his own downfall, and still desired some voice in the choosing of his successor.

This palace, which had been built by the late sovereign, and was his private property, was full of memories to Marysieńka. It was there that the nocturnal meeting had decided her fate and Sobieski's a few years previously. ‘The King, who had never done anything for her husband, might very well give him this house, now he himself was departing.’ When her request was refused, she offered a price—one hundred thousand francs. All these details we owe to Des Noyers. But the public made an outcry. If this was done, the king to be shortly chosen would be left without a roof to sleep under! Marie Sobieska fell back on the house in Paris, and applied all her powers to gaining over her husband. ‘It would be folly not to give a hearing, at least, to the offers from that quarter; they

would get something out of them, at all events, even if they could not support the resuscitated candidature openly, nor very sincerely. And then, if Condé came to the front again, they might re-open the question of Époisses.' But Sobieski still looked coldly on the plan. Very good! then she would undertake the negotiation herself, and, for that purpose she should spend the winter at Warsaw, where he himself declared he could not live. He objected on the score of expense.

'I can find all that!'

She had money, which Des Noyers, now Condé's correspondent and agent, had offered to advance her. The prince could pay it back when he became king. Des Noyers was full of confidence! And besides, M. de Bonzy was talking of his own early return to Warsaw, bringing a million with him.

Thus, once more, the household was broken up, and when the couple met again at Lemberg, in the following February, both parties were in the worst of tempers. Marysieńka had wasted her own time, and Des Noyers's money. M. de Bonzy had started for Poland, indeed, but a letter from the Primate—*ad interim* head of the Government, until the new election should be concluded—had stopped him on the frontier. He was spending the winter at Marienwerder, in Prussia, and even there his presence roused suspicion and protest. The Polish nobility was disturbed; the Courts of Vienna and Berlin were alarmed. The most pitiful expedients became necessary. Letters from Condé to the Bishop of Béziers, and despatches from that prelate to the Chevalier de Gremonville, the King's ambassador to the Imperial Court—quoted in the most public manner by their authors, though every one of them was in cypher,—roundly proclaimed the abandonment of the prince's candidature. Marysieńka had, it is true, been favoured with others, which maintained the principle of the double candidature, official and semi-official, but they had given her no great satisfaction. The Marquisate of Époisses stood in the way of any possible agreement. On this head, Condé was quite intractable. He declared

he did not possess the means of compensating Guitaut, ^{dis-} ^{ple} that he 'would not dishonour himself, and sacrifice a friend ^{ple} even for the sake of ten crowns.' Marysieńka ventured ^{net} ^{ne} appeal to Louis XIV., but the king assumed a haughty tone ^a ^{es} 'He would not permit any one to set their foot on his throat.' Once the prince became king, he would doubtless find means ^e to satisfy all those who had worked to raise him to that dignity, and meanwhile, Sobieski and his spouse ought to be very well content with what was being done for them.

But this made no impression on Marie Sobieska. In the month of January, she sent the Chevalier d'Arquien to Marienwerder, to demand an explicit answer. 'Yes, or no? Was she to have Époisses, and did they desire that Condé should be king?' In February, M. de Bonzy sent his secretary, the Abbé Courtois, to meet her at Lemberg. Then came a fine diplomatic passage-at-arms, lasting several weeks, and so closely contested on both sides, that when it ended, the one evident point was that nothing had been arranged. An abbey had been promised to the Chevalier d'Arquien; Marysieńka demanded that of Fécamp. It was not the king's to bestow? Well, she cared little! she would rather treat with the Emperor, or with the Tsar.

'No Abbey, no quarter!'

The phrase was to travel even to the ears of the *Grand Roi* himself.

And Sobieski, too, had a word to say. A new candidate, Charles of Lorraine, had appeared upon the scene. He was supported by the Emperor, and was gaining numerous adherents. If Condé desired to checkmate him, it was indispensable, according to the Grand Marshal, that he should appear on the frontier at the moment when '*the bell was cast*.' Otherwise, as Lorraine would be on the spot, every one would go over to him. And besides, he had made most tempting offers.

'But he has not a sixpence, and three-parts of the persons to whom he has promised money will never get it!'

'So long as I get mine!'

wojondé was consulted, and answered in the negative. co'He did not care to risk his reputation in such fashion, v'he made up his mind to go to Poland, though he should tily find five hundred men to declare they chose him, he sould perish with them, and France would never see him more, but as a corpse, or else a king.' And besides the news he had received from Poland was not calculated to encourage him to such an adventure. What was the meaning of these 'capitulations' of which he heard? Did the Poles flatter themselves he was coming to their country to 'play the part of a Doge of Venice?'

There was something of a rupture about the fashion in which the Abbé Courtois left Lemberg, and Marie Sobieska wrote to M. de Bonzy that 'they would meet again at Warsaw.' Fresh grievances were shortly added to those inscribed, during her last stay in Paris, on the tablets of her rancorous memory. Her elder sister, Marie-Louise, who, failing to find a husband, had passed from the rank of maid-of-honour, to that of lady of the bed-chamber to Marie Thérèse, had contrived, at the age of five-and-thirty, to cast the matrimonial noose over the head of the Comte de Béthune. The treatment she received in France on this occasion, was not that for which her younger sister had hoped. The whole Court cracked jokes over the tardy marriage, and not a voice was lifted in remonstrance. Even M. de Bonzy's correspondence with the Abbé Courtois echoes the general feeling.

'Mdlle. d'Arquien has lost her sweet quality of virginity at last! All her relations describe her as one of the greatest martyrs of the century, and one of the boldest in endurance of her suffering. They are a very lucky family. . . .' Marysienka fretted till she fell downright ill. Sobieski, who was travelling on private business, was absent when she took to her bed. At the first warning he hurried to her side, and found her hovering between life and death. She was not far removed from her confinement, and had been attacked by smallpox. Thanks to applications of milk and pig's fat, her

face was unmarked, but her hair and eyebrows fell out. *Celadon* vowed he never noticed it.

It was springtime, in 1669, the Diet of Election was just about to assemble. *Astrea*, eager and pugnacious as ever, struggling against her exhaustion, and gathering her strength together by a desperate effort, insisted on travelling to Warsaw with her husband. The event, in all probability, was decided by her courage, and her state of health.

II

When she reached Warsaw, she was fain to take to her bed again. 'Her child had ceased to stir within her.' Sobieski was half distracted, and more than ever tossed on the waves of his constitutional indecision. The Bishop of Béziers was not in a position to influence him seriously by his advice. He had drawn nearer to the capital, but durst not show himself as yet. He lay *perdu* at a country house at Białoleka, and dared not venture on anything beyond nocturnal meetings, protected by the most elaborate precautions.

The election of the *Marshal* (President of the Diet) marked the first stage in the rout of the French party. M. de Bonzy had impressed his faithful followers with the necessity of choosing Pieniazek, Starost of Oswiécim; but the position was won by a member of the Potocki family, who had been gained over to the Duke of Neuburg's party by the Elector of Brandenburg. A scene of tumult ensued. There was shouting and cursing, and even pistol firing. Alarmed by the shots, the senators fled from the Hall of Assembly, and hid themselves beneath their own coaches. The Bishop of Kujawy was closely pursued by a *Szlachcic* from the Palatinate of Sieradz, yelling coarse threats, and brandishing a pistol. Sobieski drew his sword, and the aggressor disappeared into the crowd. Paid touts of the French or Austrian party cast names—Condé, Lorraine, Neuburg, the Muscovite, a *Piast*—acclaimed by some, and hissed by others, to the mob. Pamphlets and caricatures

were freely circulated. One of these last represented Charles of Lorraine seated on a starved and restive horse, with two Jesuits dragging at its bridle, while a fat canon thrashed its sorry hind quarters. Yet, on the whole, this particular candidate seemed the favourite. The Jesuits obtained him great popularity by publishing the fact that three hundred saints had been members of his family, and that he was in the habit of saying litanies every day. The *Szlachta*, though feeling scant respect for its clergy (and little did it deserve), was, nevertheless, exceedingly devout, even as the lower-class Russians in the present day. As a matter of fact, the chances between Lorraine and Condé were fairly equal; but ever since Lubomirski's time, the election of a French prince had become a sort of scarecrow, synonymous with absolute and despotic power. And by one of those queer chances so frequent in electoral struggles, Condé was opposed by all his fellow-countrymen settled in Warsaw. 'These rascals,' wrote the Bishop of Béziers, 'sell all their wares at three times what they are worth, and they are afraid M. le Prince will put a stop to it.' But, above all other things, his candidature was not put forward officially, and the drawbacks attending an underhand competition soon made themselves felt. The very first time the prince's partisans endeavoured to invite supporters for his claim, a storm of protest broke.

'Why were the deliberations disturbed by these references to a person who was not a candidate? Whose candidate was he? That of France? No! for France was putting forward Neuburg. Then he must be an impostor, a traitor to his own king. Down with him! death to him! Kill! Kill!' And once more bullets whistled, and swords sprang from their scabbards. Lorraine's partisans appealed to the Primate, and called on him to do his duty.

'*Excludatur! Excludatur!*'

The Archbishop of Gniezno—the Polish Primate always held this See—cast an inquiring glance at Sobieski; but he made no sign. His thoughts were with Marysieńka, whom

he had left in grievous danger. What cared he for Condé? He had supported him, in former times, because it had been *her* desire, and because this course promised him means of acquiring the footing in France of which *she* dreamt. Looking at the matter from the high position he himself had already attained, the idea of submitting to any sovereign, within the confines of his own country, was as secretly displeasing to him as to every other man of his rank and class. The spirit of anarchy, that black demon of Poland, possessed him bodily. This was one of the reasons, and the chief, why he had not followed up his last negotiations with De Bonzy. And now no agreement had been reached, and Marysieńka lay dying. What was to become of him in France without her? He bowed his head, and tears coursed down his manly cheeks. Then, in the midst of the momentary stupor and the sudden silence evoked by his grief, the Bishop of Cracow rose to his feet. Since his colleague of Gniezno held his peace, he was resolved to fill his place. To quiet men's minds and prevent blood-shedding the exclusion of Condé was, he believed, an indispensable condition. *Excludatur pro bono pacis!*

And it was done.

On the morrow, Marie Sobieska bore still-born twins, and that very night the Bishop of Béziers knocked at the door of the house in the suburb of Ujazdów, inhabited by the Grand Marshal and his wife. He was met by Sobieski, whose brow was calm and clear once more. The sufferer was better. But French interests were as sick as they well could be. What course should be pursued? Would it not be wisest, since nothing else offered, to support Neuburg, and so prevent the success of Lorraine? Sobieski protested. 'If they were to bray Lorraine and Neuburg together in a mortar, they could not make a king out of the two.'

What was to be done then?

It may be that Marysieńka's husband nursed an idea of his own, in the back of his head. Amongst many other pamphlets, one entitled *Trutina variorum Poloniae can-*

didatorum had, for over a month past, attracted universal attention throughout the country. 'The author, Andrew Olszowski, Bishop of Culm, pressed the necessity for the election of a *Piast*. The idea in itself was welcome, and spread far and wide, especially among the lower ranks of the nobility. But the individual *Piast* suggested raised a smile. This was Michael Wisniowiecki, a young man of great family, with many powerful relations, but with no personal antecedents, and no fortune. His father, Jerome, was the object of a great posthumous popularity, due to the fierce determination with which he had put down the rebellion of the Ukraine Cossacks. But that exploit had swallowed up his fortune. His widow lived in a convent, his son dwelt none knew where, lived none knew how, and had no acquaintances. 'Do you call that a king?' said Sobieski, shrugging his shoulders. 'Pooh, pooh! This country needs a different kind of leader! A *Piast*, if you will, but we must have a man and a warrior!'

De Bonzy could get nothing more out of him, and took his way back to Bialoleka, where, fortunately for himself, he was sure of finding other company. Mme. Paç appeared there frequently, accompanied by her brother the Comte de Mailly. Her husband's family offered their services. She did not go so far as to think Condé's cause absolutely lost. No exclusion could avail against the popular will, and that will might, if necessary, be manifested by a *confederation*, the supreme argument of every Polish faction in a difficulty. Only it was not easy to form a confederation without the army, and that meant without Sobieski. A mediator came forward—Morsztyn again. His wife was another constant visitor at Bialoleka. She was young, pretty, winning, and might lend valuable assistance, especially during Marysienka's illness. She and her husband contrived to arrange a dinner party at Sobieski's house, at which the representatives of the two rival families were to meet. The Paç family even undertook to secure the presence of the Field-Hetman,—sworn enemy of the Crown-Hetman—a kinsman of the young man put forward

by the Bishop of Culm. But at the last moment he sent an excuse, pleading an indisposition 'which prevented him from drinking.' Every one, as a matter of fact, drank steadily all through the negotiations. The Abbé Courtois, hurrying one night with a message from the French Ambassador, to the house of the Grand Chancellor Paç, found him dead drunk. He fell back upon Ujazjów, and there discovered the Grand Marshal in the same condition. The dinner party was a gloomy business. Wisniowiecki's defection had cast a chill over the proceedings. When the guests left the table, Sobieski drew the Bishop of Béziers into a corner, and said:

'These people are deceiving you—they have made a treaty with Lorraine. You will be outwitted, and as I do not care to be outwitted with you, I must ask you not to reckon on me any further.'

There was an indignant outcry from the Paç party. They were devoted, body and soul, so they declared, to the King and to the Prince, but Chavagnac, the representative of Charles of Lorraine, was throwing a great deal of money about, and Schafgotsch, the Emperor's Ambassador, had offered them three millions. The deduction was clear enough. This time it was M. de Bonzy's turn to make an outcry.

'Three millions! My powers will not permit me to go so far as three millions!'

'Pooh! The King of France has so much money he does not know what to do with it.'

And so, day and night, the parleying went on. At the last moment, three days before the election, the miserable De Bonzy gave in. Fresh despatches from his court had ordered him to neglect nothing which might checkmate Lorraine, and to dare everything to secure Condé's election. He promised the three millions.

'Too late!' answered the Paç.

Half distracted, he rushed to Sobieski.

I warned you, said the Grand Marshal with the greatest apparent calm, then he added,—come and see my wife, she is much better!

Marysieńka still kept her bed, but if her health had not yet fully returned, she had recovered all her energy. Instantly she broached the subject of Époisses and the abbey. If she could not have Fécamp she desired to have Conches. But she must have the patent now, at once! She went back to her old phrase 'No abbey, no quarter!' and added:

'Think it over, M. l'Ambassadeur, I do not expect Chavagnac till five o'clock!'

Sobieski, on his part, talked of large sums of money which ought to be distributed within the next four-and-twenty hours. He asked nothing for himself, 'he would accept Condé in his shirt.' But he had brought a whole army with him to Warsaw, he had twelve thousand men to feed, and only the night before, Chavagnac had sent him 'a very good banker's bill,' for a hundred thousand crowns, with the promise of an abbey at the gates of Vienna, for his brother-in-law. With a despairing gesture, the Bishop turned his pockets inside out. The Paç had stripped him of everything. The only money he had left was a reserve fund of four hundred thousand livres, and this he was not free to spend as he chose. He had definite orders to pay it over, in the very last resource, to the Duke of Neuburg's agents.

'This comes of running with the hare and hunting with the hounds,' remarked Sobieski, sententiously; 'neither you nor I can do anything more. It must be as God wills.'

From this point to the very end he seemed utterly indifferent. Was it downright weariness or deliberate intention? No man can tell. It may be that his perfect knowledge of his country and its inhabitants had helped him to guess what was about to come to pass—that Neuburg and Lorraine were to neutralise each other's efforts, and to open a free passage to a *Piast*. But which *Piast*? Sobieski was canvassed from every quarter, sent every applicant to Marysieńka, who bargained desperately with all, but came to no agreement with any one. During the night between 18th and 19th June, his brother-in-law, Michael Radziwill, the husband of a tenderly-loved sister,

backed by Morsztyn, and a few other friends, persuaded the Grand Marshal to make a final overture to the Bishop of Béziers. The election was to take place on the morrow. These gentlemen, if they were given four hundred thousand livres to distribute during the morning, believed they could undertake to secure Condé's election. De Bonzy lifted his hands to heaven, and then pointed to the door. It had just closed on one of the Duke of Neuburg's agents, departing with the reserve fund in his pocket.

And so the sun rose on one of the strangest and most intricate dramas ever enacted on the stage of that great puppet-show known as the Elective Diet of Poland.

III

. The scene has often been described. A huge fortified enclosure in the open country near Warsaw, circled with ramparts of earth, ditches, and palisades. In the centre, a great tent (*szopa*) for the deliberations of the Senate and the Deputies. All around it smaller tents, for the meetings of the different Palatinates, and then a huge bare space alive with fifty thousand horsemen, armed to the teeth, and accompanied by twice their number of footmen, all armed as well. This formed the electoral body. Every *szlachcic* had a vote, and there were a hundred thousand of them—three hundred thousand, according to certain computations. This was no aristocracy; it was a copy, rather, as I have already said, of the *Civitas Romana*. The greater number worked with their own hands on their own scanty acres, though never parted from their swords, which each toiler wore bound about his waist with a common cord. The sword, together with the coat of arms ('*jewel*,' as they called it)—which was borne in common by whole tribes,—and the right of attending these electoral meetings, formed the distinctive badge of the class. They had few family parchments. If any one ventured an inquiry on this subject, they answered haughtily, like Mickiewicz' hero, 'Go into the

forest and ask the oaks who gave them the right to raise their heads above the other trees!' To collect the votes, the Primate rode round the enclosure on horseback. But it was as well to feel the way beforehand, and find out whether there was a chance of securing any unanimous election. For this purpose, emissaries, sharp-nosed and sharp-eared, went hither and thither, halting here and tarrying there, collecting information, sowing watchwords and promises broadcast. And soon the battle of opinions began, with fifty thousand pairs of lungs to swell the fray. The names of the various candidates were tossed like racquet balls from group to group. Questions, acclamations, threats, and often blows, clashed one against the other, in furious conflict.

This time, the scene was somewhat different. When the great moment came, the parties drawn up face to face seemed already worn out by preliminary skirmishes, satiated and exhausted at once. They had the weary look of men who had accepted payment from every hand, the dreary faces of traitors who had left no one unbetrayed. A great silence brooded over the *Kolo* (the ring of electors summoned to deliberate, in the open air). For a long time each side gazed at the other, without saying a word. Then, as no man ventured to open the essential subject of debate, side questions were considered, and hours spent in idle and unimportant discussion. When the sun grew low, a priest, Czartoryski, Bishop of Kujawy, and a learned man, Fredro, Castellan of Leopold, seriously proposed that the names of all the candidates should be placed in a chalice, and that a child should draw out that of the person elected. This proposal was not well received, and the Bishop of Culm went a step further. Faithful to the principles of his pamphlet, to which we have already referred, and knowing the men with whom he had to deal, he suggested the singing of the *Veni Creator*,—an appeal for Divine inspiration, a call to Heaven to bring the decisive word to lips which, as yet, dared not pronounce it.

And this was what was needful in the case of such men

as these, with consciences like lead, and empty brains which had ceased to do their work. Enthusiastically they cast themselves on their knees, and voices grown hoarse with bargaining and perjury raised the sacred chant. Then, above the heads and souls bowed down with emotion and religious expectation, a voice—none ever knew whose, or whence it came—dropped a word, dear already to the popular heart, upon the silence. *A Piast!* It was as if God Himself had spoken. Some men declared, upon their oath, that at that moment they beheld a dove hovering in the still air. Others heard the buzzing of a swarm of bees, an infallible portent of prosperity.

Thousands of voices shouted '*a Piast! a Piast!* Sobieski was present, and we can scarce doubt that his dazzled eyes gazed on a splendid vision of their own. But the crowd had no eyes for him. Its glance was raised to heaven, and waited for another token. Again there was silence for a space, and then a voice broke out:

'Michael Wisniowiecki!'

Sobieski turned him about, saw one of the deputies of Kalisz with his mouth wide open, and stood in dumb amazement. The man who had shouted the name was the Palatine of the province, Opalinski, a personal friend and partisan of Condé's. He explained, subsequently, that he had thought 'this absurdity would amuse the *Szlachta* and tire it out.' But the 'absurdity' acted like a match set to a train of gunpowder. Within a few seconds the whole *Kolo* was yelling in unison.

Wisniowiecki! Wisniowiecki!

Here was the end. Poland had a king, and that king the young man whose name had been proclaimed. Where was he? In vain they sought him within the enclosure. He had not even taken the trouble of putting in an appearance. He was found, at last, in a tiny house on the outskirts of the town, reading a book. His whole fortune consisted of a bed, two chairs, and forty crowns. He was conducted in state to the Cathedral.

'The Poles,' wrote Des Noyers a few days later, 'are right when they say they are *God's fools*, and He takes care of them.' These events happened on the 19th of June 1669. That very day, and almost at that very hour; the Chevalier de Gremonville, French Ambassador at Vienna, received a despatch from his master, commanding him to make such terms with the Emperor as should ensure Condé's election. The great King's last diplomatic inspiration was somewhat belated.

IV

'The newly elected King,' wrote M. de Bonzy, 'is a mere child, a young pigeon, whom every one looked down upon. It is as great a miracle as if Maldachini had been made Pope. They have given themselves a real *kinglet*, this time!'

The words were absolutely true. Below the senseless impulse which had brought about this election, there lay a foundation of unconscious reasoning. The new King would be in no one's way, and no one need stand on ceremony with him.

'At all events,' added the French Envoy, 'the Lorrainer, too, is overthrown.' Sobieski was less easily consoled. Never, he swore, would he acknowledge 'that fool, that *ape*, that idiot, that beggar—to whom the late Queen used to allow four thousand livres a year to help him to study in Bohemia.' Marysieńka showed more practical good sense than her husband at this juncture. There was no use in quarrelling with an accomplished fact, which they had not succeeded in preventing. Their best plan was to make what they could out of it, and forthwith she plunged into a fresh negotiation with the Bishop of Béziers. The Ambassador was returning to France. He must explain that, failing a king who was devoted to his interests, the ruler of the *Enchanted Palace* stood more than ever in need of other faithful servants in Poland. And the price at which she rated her allegiance had already been discussed. The Bishop promised, and he kept

his word. Events had proved his own folly in neglecting his first love, and he was thoroughly repentant. In spite of his misadventure, he was graciously received at Versailles, promoted to the Archbishopric of Toulouse, and shortly entrusted with a diplomatic mission to Spain—whence he wrote Marysieńka very tender letters (preserved amongst the Des Noyers Papers at Chantilly), and where he continued most active in his endeavours to serve his friend's interest. He encouraged her idea of establishing herself on the banks of the Seine, declaring that he 'was, and must be, out of his own orbit, until some miracle re-united him to his "all."' And till that miraculous conjuncture of events should supervene, he sent her the patent of a pension of twelve thousand *livres*. When forced to cross the Pyrenees, he descanted on 'his mortal grief, and the demons which incessantly tormented him, now he could no longer see the angel who was the sole object of all his longings.' But he still continued Marysieńka's able and zealous advocate. She, on her side, wasted no time in useless recrimination. The new king's mother was her sister-in-law, and had been her enemy. There had been an open quarrel between them, and a lengthy lawsuit about Zamoyski's property. Then there had been a reconciliation, and even a question of a marriage between the *Ape* and one of Sobieski's nieces. The said *Ape*, on his part, had a recollection, and a tender one, of the ex-Palatine of Sandomir, whose guest he had once been, at Zamosc. Marysieńka did her best to establish a link between the past and the present. She dragged her husband to Cracow, where the coronation was to take place, and was so taken up with her good work that she forgot to answer M. de Bonzy's letters, a fact which elicited bitter complaints from him.

The new Archbishop of Toulouse was, however, kept thoroughly well informed of the deeds and looks of his 'angel' during her sojourn in the second city of the Polish kingdom. This service was rendered him by another lady correspondent, whom, if she herself is to be believed, the

flighty prelate's departure had cast into the deepest despair. Her letters (how, I know not) have found their way into the solemn diplomatic papers at the Quai d'Orsay, and to them we owe some valuable items of information. This other rival of Marysienka's gave herself out as being determined to live, in future, far from the world, and spend her time 'in playing cards and saying her prayers when cards wearied her.' She was admirably well informed, nevertheless, concerning everything that happened at Court, and more especially concerning Marie Sobieska's actions. This rival was Mme. Morszyn.

Marysienka, she assured the Bishop, had hastened, before her health was completely re-established, to appear in the new king's presence, and take her place amongst the ladies who sought to conquer his fancy. She was worn to a skeleton, and startlingly pale. But she put on quantities of rouge, skilfully concealed her thinness, and made up for lack of charm by excess of coquetry. Here are a few specimens of the writer's style:—

'12th October 1669.

'The *Grande Maréchale* makes soft eyes at the king, and in the most open manner, but in vain does she employ every kind of art, she gains nothing by it. The Grand Marshal is as diligent as usual, and given over to his great occupations of going out hunting, attending collations and banquets, and paying visits to fair ladies. In fine, he says he would die rather than change. . . .'

'19th October 1669.

'The *Grande Maréchale* is making desperate love to the king. She has given him a bracelet, with the most extravagant speeches. You know right well she is never chary of them! But what makes the whole thing most amusing, is that there is no secrecy about it, for all these mysteries are known from the lips of the king, who makes an utter mock of her, and shows her favours to any one he thinks will not mention it to the fair lady, who only uses all these

endearments in the hope of clutching something for herself—for I dare swear there is no love in the matter. You really ought to let me know on what terms you are with the vixen. . . .’

‘21st October 1669.

‘The *Grande Maréchale* still goes on making love to the king, but with so little success on the fair lady’s part, that, if she were wise, she would desist. I believe all these soft looks were intended to procure her some privileges, concerning which she has failed. Oh! my God, in what a perfect fury must we be, in our heart of hearts, and over so many things at once! And what I tell you is the truth, neither more nor less—unless it be that we are growing as thin as we could possibly desire—if indeed it is possible to be any thinner than we were!’

If this good-natured pen may be believed, Marysienka’s great anxiety, at this moment, and the explanation of all her assiduous attentions to his Majesty, was her desire to obtain permission to sell her *Starosties* (properties bestowed by the crown), and thus to find means for a journey to France, for ‘she was so mortified by having no adorers, that she was in actual despair.’ Sobieski, blinded by, and absorbed in, his own pleasures, encouraged his wife’s plans and endeavours. M. de Bonzy was better informed than his correspondent. Before his own departure from Poland, during the night between the 21st and 22nd of June, he had received a visit from the Grand Marshal, still furious over the recent election. He declared he could not make up his mind to see the ‘ape’ crowned, and by a series of useless imprecations, led up to a ‘surprising proposal.’

‘If you will promise me the king’s support, I will go to Prussia, I will summon the army, and there await the Prince’s arrival.’

‘But I have no authority to promise that.’

‘Then I will appeal to Lorraine. Chavagnac is waiting for me now, in the house of the Palatine of Russia.’

'As you will.'

This was a mere freak of temper, the outpouring of Sobieski's fury, and did not deceive the ambassador. But in the month of July, the Chevalier d'Arquien was despatched to France, with the formal notification of Michael's accession. His selection for this mission was a triumph for Marysieńka. He carried private instructions, which proved that the Marshal's rage was already cooling, and he himself settling down to more reasonable plans. Sobieski had imparted his feelings and ideas to a certain number of friends, and a regular conspiracy was being organised to overthrow the king, for whom—as for her husband in days of yore—Marie Sobieska was weaving bracelets out of her own tresses. The victim was to be strangled with the fair lady's love-tokens. The poor young fellow was to be driven from his shadowy throne, and put to death, if he ventured on resistance. The Primate, the Bishop of Cracow, the Palatines of Russia, of Kief, Posnania and Kalisz; the Castellan of Posnania, amongst the Senators; the Grand-Chancellor and Grand-Treasurer, amongst the Ministers; the Potočki, the Radizwills, and the Oginski amongst the chief nobility—all promised their assistance, on condition that the King of France should condescend to grant his own. They had undertaken 'on pain of assassination,' to keep their common determination secret, even from their wives.

Marysieńka was the only exception to this rule; she was the very soul of the conspiracy. But d'Arquien and his instructions reached France at an unfavourable moment. The king was deep in preparations for a fresh war with Holland, and most anxious, on this account, to renew his former treaties with the Emperor Leopold, who, on his side, openly declared his intention of supporting King Michael, and connecting him with his own family by the ties of marriage. And besides, Louis XIV. considered he had already spent too much on Poland, both in the matter of 'heroic resolutions,' and hard cash, and with far too little result. He

nursed a grudge against the Poles, who had tempted him to do it, and a very particular spite against Marie Sobieska. On 17th July 1669, he wrote to M. de Bonzy:—

‘I confess that the behaviour of the *Grande Maréchale*—who was born my subject, and who has pressed her foot very hardly on my throat when she saw, or thought, I stood in absolute need of her husband’s services—and all her indiscreet, imprudent, and audacious sayings, have . . . remained in my mind and in my heart . . . I cannot forget the fine words spoken by that woman to the Abbé Courtois: “No abbey, no quarter! No Époisses, no quarter! No some other thing, no quarter!”’

And he concluded—‘And my final and absolute determination is to leave them in their present state of mortification.’

The ex-Ambassador ventured on a timid apology for his ‘angel,’ but could not, on the whole, do otherwise than approve his sovereign’s sentiments. Polish feeling was altogether too bitterly excited against France. When one of the new king’s friends suggested his taking a French wife, Michael started three paces backwards.

‘God forbid! I should be stoned to death!’

When, therefore, in December 1669, the Comte de Lionne—own nephew to the Minister—travelled to Cracow to congratulate King Michael on his accession, his only instructions were to observe the general condition of the country, in which he was not to sojourn more than a week, and he had particular orders not to see the Sobieskis more than twice—once on his arrival, and once again before his departure. Meanwhile, M. d’Arquien found every door in Paris shut in his face. He announced his defeat, received fresh orders—together with the news that the plot was ripening, and that no time must be lost—did what he could, conferred with the Marquis de Béthune, and finally made up his mind to apply at the Hôtel de Longueville.

This time, his reception exceeded his own expectations, and those of his Polish constituents. He found himself in presence of a Prince, the darling of Parisian salons, the

MARYSIENKA'S DIPLOMACY

spoilt child of the most famous beauties of the Court, who was filled with the profoundest sense of boredom, and only panted for an opportunity of turning his back on those social pleasures which he deemed unworthy of his ambition. The opportunity now offered appeared all that he could wish. Without taking time for any long reflection, he declared himself ready to make the attempt. He would go and join the conspirators, and, backed by them, would offer himself to Poland as her king. If permission for his journey should be refused in high places, he would do without it, but not until he had exhausted every possible means of gaining all desirable concurrence and support.

So well did he play his game, that within a very short time he had won over those whose adherence had seemed most doubtful. The Dowager Duchesse de Longueville, so famous for her connection with the Fronde, in spite of her present life of seclusion and devotion, gave proof, for a moment, of her old passionate eagerness, and signed a draft on the brothers Fromont at Dantzic, for one hundred and sixty thousand livres, to defray the preliminary expenses of the enterprise. Meanwhile three emissaries, or confidants, who made as much clatter as thirty ordinary men, Akakia, Dubois, and the Abbé de Paulmier, spread the great news along the Baltic coasts; and soon all Europe heard that King Michael was shortly to be dethroned by a French Prince, known as the Comte de St. Paul, until the day when his elder brother's religious vocation should place him at the head of his house, under the title of the Duc de Longueville.

No one doubted that the attempt was supported—secretly at all events—by the King of France. The Abbé de Paulmier assumed the title of 'plenipotentiary,' and vowed he would teach the Poles 'the truth of the proverb current among Paris lawyers and attorneys, "God preserve us from a Norman priest, who has only one affair in hand."' In July 1670, Marie Sobieska arrived in Dantzic. She had requested De Lionne to grant her passports into France, whither the state of her health, and 'the incompatibility of

the air of Poland with her temperament' recalled her. In reality, Sobieski himself, foreseeing the crisis which was imminent, had pressed her, this time, to leave the country. He was delaying his own action until he knew her to be in safety. And he was waiting for something else as well. The Abbé de Paulmier raised his voice so high, that the King of France himself might have been supposed to be speaking by his lips. But no proof of this assumption was to be discovered. Not a word or sign had come from Versailles. This matter must be cleared up 'before the match is set alight;' and more especially so, because events in Poland were taking an alarming turn. King Michael had become the husband of the Arch-Duchess Eleanora, 'a good-natured woman,' so Des Noyers declared, but who openly professed her fear and hatred of the French. She declared she was certain they would try to poison her, or to 'put gunpowder into her bed.' She could not hear the word France pronounced in her presence without bursting into tears. The Court of Vienna, too, was encouraging its new kinsman to take up a bold attitude, and urged severe measures against the abettors of disorder. And thereupon the former Mdle. de Mailly herself forgot she was a Frenchwoman, and all the members of the Royal household talked openly of *cutting off heads*. The Primate, the Grand-Marshal, and all the 'French factionmongers,' as they were called, were threatened. A cyphered letter addressed to one of the conspirators, the Castellan of Posnania, threw the whole Diet of the Province into an uproar. Every one vowed it was from De Lionne, and as the person to whom it was addressed refused any explanation, he was first of all wounded with a sword thrust, and then dragged before the Chief Diet, and accused of high treason. One of the French Minister's agents—and a very genuine one, Baluze by name—was obliged to flee precipitately from Polish territory, his refusal to explain his secret correspondence having evoked a threat of 'warming his feet.' Marie Sobieska's journey, would, it was hoped, help to clear the situation.

She did no good at Dantzig. The Abbé de Paulmier appeared before her shrouded, as it were, in a heavy fog, and when she made an attempt to pierce this outer mist and reach the centre—in other words, to ask for money—he faded altogether from her sight. As a sort of trial trip, she demanded the repayment of a sum of fifteen thousand crowns, which, she averred, had been given her for her journey, but which had just been spent on levies ‘for the service of France.’ The Abbé asserted he had no orders to raise troops, and wrote to his master, ‘this woman, with her unreasonable pretensions, will be a rare thorn in our sides.’ Her opinion was ‘that the plenipotentiary was either a traitor or a fool,’ and she resolved to appeal to De Lionne himself. ‘Yes, or no; was the King’s support to be reckoned on? If His Majesty desired to recant, it was necessary that they should be informed as quickly as possible.’ This done, she gave all her attention to spending the time she had to wait for the return of her courier, and the arrival of the Chevalier d’Arquien—who was to escort her to Paris, and who would no doubt bring news with him—in the most agreeable fashion possible.

The town was very full and very gay. Many conspirators had followed Sobieski’s example, and sent their wives there; some of the husbands had thought it prudent to follow their families into retirement. Marysienka opened her house, and held a kind of court, in which she seems to have shown a disposition to aspire to the royal rank she ultimately held. One day, she produced before her assembled guests a letter written by a member of her husband’s household. According to this correspondent, a report had spread throughout the army, that the Comte de St. Paul was not coming, after all. Whereupon, he wrote, the soldiers had exclaimed ‘that would not prevent us from having a King; we should choose the Grand-Marshal.’ The Abbé de Paulmier, who was present, thought he would have choked. He related the incident in his next despatch, and added this remark: ‘She is a strange woman . . . if she once gets

this chimera into her head, she will upset all our game again.'

In the month of August, the Chevalier d'Arquien made his appearance. He brought the worst of news. The Courts of Warsaw and Vienna had outstripped Marysieńka in the race to Paris; they had demanded explanations, which had been duly bestowed, and of the most out-spoken nature. Louis XIV. had, and intended to have, no connection with the agitation now surging round his cousin's name; and the King's speech was closely followed by action. The Comte de St. Paul had been forbidden to leave French territory; Akakia, whose diplomatic antecedents might have endued him, in the public eye, with a semi-official position, had been recalled, and was to be imprisoned in the Bastille.

This time, the Abbé de Paulmier had to face a fierce onslaught; but he did not flinch. The Poles would recollect, he declared, the course events had taken at the last election. The King, being obliged to humour the Emperor, had then denied his desire for Condé's success, and repudiated, in exactly the same manner, the efforts he had himself caused to be made in his behalf. Those behind the scenes understood what all this meant, and the same game was still being played. Marysieńka allowed herself to be convinced. She may not have been altogether wrong. The unlucky Akakia did make acquaintance with the Bastille, and spent a year within its walls, but when, at the end of that time, the Duc d'Anguien interceded with De Lionne for his release, he was heard to say 'Come! surely the comedy has lasted long enough!'

The same piece was still being presented, though the individual actors had been changed. But the chief performers were resolved to play their parts more carefully.

Unluckily the Polish members of the troupe understood nothing of the subtle art of theatrical make-up and scenic arrangement. They hurried on the action, forced the *dénouement*, and turned Comedy into Melodrama. This was not the case with regard to Sobieski himself. Once parted

from his wife, and left to the natural workings of his mind, he soon began to regret having undertaken the adventure. In September, he wrote, '*Sylvander* is very angry because people talk to him of business, and not of love, which is the most important matter.' But he could not get out of the business. The other conspirators, finding themselves compromised and threatened, pressed him to come to some determination. The Palatine of Pomerania, who had been charged with the duty of holding the fortresses in Prussian Poland, vowed his resources were exhausted. In the Ukraine, six thousand Tartars and as many Cossacks, gathered from the steppes 'to bring the nobility to reason,' were growing impatient. In the month of November, Sobieski, though still enlarging ceaselessly on his sufferings, his sleepless nights and melancholy days, and declaring himself incapable of giving a thought to anything save his *Astrea's* ingratitude, made up his mind to cross the Rubicon. November 19th, 1670, was chosen as the day on which the *Confederation* should be proclaimed. Its head-quarters were to be established at Cracow, 'a place,' wrote the future Chief of the Confederation to his wife, 'where there is plenty of amusement, and where the fair ladies pay their visits on their way to the *Roraty*.' (Early mass during Advent.) Every soldier in the army, which had been kept in camp for the purpose, could be relied on to swear unhesitating fealty to the new Government. On the eve of the proclamation, a thunderbolt scattered every plan to the winds.

Sobieski himself had written, as early as the previous August, to De Lionne. The answer had been travelling about for three months, thanks, it may have been, to the carelessness of the Polish post-masters. It came at last, and contained the following lines:—

'His Majesty has never had the remotest intention of doing anything himself, or by his friends and supporters, against the King of Poland. If any one has ever given your Excellency information which disagrees with this, he has deceived your Excellency.'

The disavowal was so formal and so categorical, that it seemed impossible any reservation could lie behind it. At Dantzig and at the Hotel de Longueville, accusations were hurled against Marie Sobieska. Her 'unreasonable pretensions' had compromised everything, and called forth this thunderclap. But the only thing to be done, so every one agreed, was to go home, and stay there quietly. Even on the supposition—I believe it to be an exceedingly plausible one—that the King of France himself, if not his minister, had a secret hankering after an arrangement with the Polish *confederation*, that was all over now. The Minister had rung down the curtain, and put out the footlights.

The only person who still held his ground was the Abbé de Paulmier, whose future was to be a fine exemplification of the career open to a diplomatic adventurer in the kingdom of Poland. Recalled by the Comte de St. Paul, utterly disavowed, and left without a halfpenny, he maintained his intention of carrying on the matter at his own expense. At the peril of his life, and under the most varied disguises—even in woman's attire—he scoured the country, pursued Sobieski to Lemberg, and the Primate to Lowicz. Coldly received in every quarter, he still believed himself in a fair way to organise a powerful party, to 'blunt the spurs of the little cocks of the *pospolite*' (the Polish nobility) and to manage so that the 'little lady' (Marie Sobieska) 'should only have cut off her own nose for her trouble.'

V

But Marysienka's nose remained in its natural position. Yet, when she found she had only travelled to Paris to hear the new enterprise had failed, and to be pelted with volleys of reproaches, she grew so sick of the place that she began to look more kindly on the husband she had left behind her in Poland. 'She could not tire of looking at his picture; she kissed it a thousand times a day!' But as it chanced, this returning gush of tenderness came somewhat

inopportunist. The letters which expressed it reached her husband at Lemberg in January 1670. It was carnival-time, and Sobieski, whose scruples, or whose power of sacrificing himself on the altar of conjugal fidelity, would seem, at last, to have been exhausted, was taking advantage of the season, to allow his full-blooded temperament a little more indulgence. In the month of March, the Abbé de Paulmier, who still hovered about the whilom chief of the unsuccessful plot, penned the following report: 'The Grand Marshal has been very ill, not for many days, truly, but so severely that he was blooded seven times. It was an inevitable sickness, the result of his excesses during carnival.' Some symptom of this state of things appeared in the answers despatched to *Astrea*. It was her turn, now, to make acquaintance with rebuffs, and unkind thrusts. The treatment bestowed upon his portrait did not have the good fortune to please *Sylvander*, and he wrote—

'Strange happiness mine! to be loved from a distance, and caressed when I am out of reach.'

She was little accustomed to such replies, and forthwith, the eternal battle grew bitterer, and took on a threatening look. Marysienka endeavoured to justify her dislike for living in Poland.

'How could I like it? Even when Zamoyski was alive, I felt every one hated me, and if it had not been for the Queen, I should have been forced to beg my bread from door to door.'

'Beg your bread! When? With whom? Not when you were the wife of the richest nobleman in Poland, nor yet, I fancy, since you married me! As for the interval, you yourself must recollect whether it was a long one! You insult the love I have always borne you, when you make such assertions.'

'Your love! Let us not speak of it! It is nothing but a fancy and a dream. I can love better than that—and I have proved it. Have I not left France once already, to go back to you—you only, for the Queen was dead.'

'To go back to your husband? Zounds, madam! a fine boast you make! Our new Queen, who belongs to the greatest family in Europe, has declared she will follow her husband even to the army, and if she has to live with him in his tent. The man she treats in such a fashion is truly loved, and really happy.'

'He is loved, because he is well-favoured, and worthy!'

'If I have no other merit, I thought at least I possessed that of pleasing you; but kings are privileged persons; I learnt that at Cracow, like everybody else.'

'You are impertinent. I have no guilt to reproach myself with, either in coquetry or gallantry. And I love you as I ought.'

'Tis with a hidden love then, a love I am not able to conceive.'

'I pray God to enlighten you.'

'Do not blaspheme. If God were to hear you, and I came to love you in the same fashion, we should probably never see each other again. Loving you as I do, in my own way, which I hold the true one, I lose everything, even my health, when I am parted from you: my head aches, I grow dizzy. . . .'

'You are ill because you drink too much. I have too vivid a recollection of your drunken hiccoughs. Ah! if that were to go on, I think I should renounce you.'

'What? But you do renounce me, madam, as it is, and your tenderness is very like hatred. It may be, truly, that you do detest me!'

A rupture seemed more than possible. A little more on both sides and the irreparable words would certainly be spoken. Boldly, Marysieńska assumed the initiative. She announced the near departure of M. de Bohan, a French officer, who went backwards and forwards constantly between France and Poland, and frequently performed commissions for her. Then, dipping her pen in gall, she drew up a regular ultimatum, of which he was to be the bearer. When Sobieski received the missive, he almost 'fell on his back.'

He had declared that his health suffered from the continence to which his wife's absence condemned him. Very good! she gave him 'carte blanche' to take his own way. If he objected to this course, she would consent to live with him again, but on her own conditions. She considered, in fact, that the slight scruple he had shown with regard to his engagements, had set her free from hers. And, to begin with, she would not, for the future, spend more than eight months in the country.

He thought he must be dreaming. Had she lost every trace of conscience and of decency? What engagements did she refer to? Her brother had not yet received his lieutenancy of the Garde-du-Corps, and she herself was still waiting for her *tabouret*, but he had no power over these matters. Eight months in the country! But she never even spent three there! She went to Warsaw whenever she liked, and stayed there as long as she chose. What had become of the hollow tree, and the desert island, in which she had once desired to be shut up with *Celadon*? One fine day, she had discovered she was tired of his houses in Volhynia and Podolia; she must have one in Prussia—the only part of Poland, she declared, where there were decent houses, gardens, a police, and a post.' Instantly he had built her a country house at Gniew. In three days she was sick of it. She could not, she declared, talk to the *Szlachcianki* (ladies of the Polish nobility). Yet their company was as good, surely, as that of Mme. Feudherbe, the *dame de compagnie* she dragged about with her whithersoever she went,—a woman who bore children without possessing any acknowledged husband. If she had grown tired of being loved and doted on, and spoilt, as no other woman had ever been, in Poland or in France either, he, too, had grown weary of her extravagance and folly. 'No dog would have endured the treatment he had received, even before their marriage!'

Eight whole pages did Sobieski write in his fury, to his aggravating partner. But he omitted sending any direct reply to her ultimatum. He dismissed M. de Bohan, without

any clue to his intention on this point, and departed to join the army, determined, as he said, 'to fight like a man who has lost everything he loves.' And fight he did, like the hero he was—massacred numerous Tartars, and risked his life no more, and no less, than was his ordinary wont. He always did risk it, with the utmost freedom. In October he reappeared, crowned with fresh laurels, hailed for the second time as saviour of his country, and in somewhat less doleful spirits, already.

During this interval, Marysieńska had been reflecting ; and having thought the matter out, she made her preparations for return, without any external pressure. Her treatment in Paris had grown absolutely unfriendly. The watchword, both at Court and in the town, was that she had ruined M. de Longueville's business, as she had ruined that of M. de Condé. Thereupon the Longuevilles turned their backs on her, and even the arrears of her pension of twelve thousand livres were refused. The Archbishop of Toulouse was as faithful and devoted as ever ; but he was far away, in Spain, and the death of De Lionne (1st September 1671) had diminished his credit. Marysieńska had been disposed, at first, to rejoice over the Minister's demise. But before long, she felt inclined to bewail it. De Lionne held her wild fancies in suspicion, and thought her claims impertinent ; but he loved a pretty woman. He dismissed the importunate fair, but his refusals were always wrapped in dainty compliments. Those who came after him were less considerate ; and Marysieńska was reduced to regretting the company of the Polish *Szlachcianki*.

Sobieski betrayed but scant enthusiasm concerning his wife's return—the motives whereof he guessed with a clear-sightedness which was quite new-born. Naturally addicted to recalling memories of the past, he conjured up a picture of the conjugal existence he was so shortly to recommence, in all its details, both large and small, and nothing but unpleasant expectations rose before his disappointed eyes,—already, it may be, roving in search of other charms. Once, he recol-

lected, she had let one of her children go on screaming, close to his ears, while he was at work. Another day, seeing him look sad and anxious, she had burst out laughing in his face. As was only natural, he ended by casting about for fresh grudges and causes of complaint against the woman who had certainly misused him.

He ended by frightening her thoroughly. Had her skill in handling her feminine weapons failed her at last? She had merely judged it wise to keep her mighty lover at bay, but he, like a booby—hero though he was—took everything seriously, and treated her pin-pricks as though they were knife-thrusts! Could it be that she had gone too far?

‘Your letters are very cold,’ she observed.

‘Yours do not burn me either. Frost must have set in early in France, as it has done here.

This time he pleaded illness, and did not go to meet her at Dantzig. Thoroughly alarmed, she betook herself to strong measures. The good offices of Des Noyers had placed her in a position to play the double classic part of the jealous mistress and the outraged wife. She quoted names and dates. He, in his turn, lost countenance, protested his innocence, but gave in at last. They spent the winter and spring, up to April 1672, in each other's company. There was peace, but only moderate satisfaction, if we may judge by this other retrospect, preserved in one of the husband's letters.

‘I rise early—being obliged thereto by my business—and that is the moment you choose for courting slumber, after having spent the whole night chattering with your women. I go to rest, and you get up. There is hardly time to make the bed between us. Absent, I am longed for, covered with kisses, in your fancy, from head to foot. When I return, the first day passes pretty well; the second is less good, and on the third, you look at me as you would look at a dish of which you had eaten too much.’

In short, when the married couple were not quarrelling, they were bored. And in her dreary home, Marysienka,

too, began to conjure up old memories—memories of evil times at Zamosc. When spring came, the Abbé de Paulmier undertook to introduce an element of diversion.

VI

The intrepid agent had neither quitted Poland, nor relinquished his ambitious plans. At this juncture, he flattered himself, circumstances promised somewhat better for their success ; and, as a matter of fact, the political horizon all over Europe seemed completely changed. The result of the war with Holland had been such as to induce the Elector to make overtures to the States-General. The Emperor was preparing to follow his example. Montecuccoli was shortly to be face to face with Turenne, on the Rhine. And the King of France consequently would have no reason to show special consideration for any other power, and therefore none which need prevent him from supporting a Polish movement in favour of a French Prince, and against a King allied to the House of Austria. His Majesty was, on the contrary, likely to consider this a most desirable diversion.

To minds so willing to be convinced, the argument seemed plausible enough. A Diet, which broke up almost as soon as it was opened, assembled the great officials and dignitaries of the kingdom at Warsaw, and on July 1st, 1672, thirty of these, headed by the Primate and the Grand Marshal, signed an *Act of Confederation*. This document made a fresh appeal to the Most Christian King, beseeching him to send a Prince of his blood to govern Poland, in place of '*the Ape*,' as Sobieski still called him ; while, to counterbalance the epithet, and in anticipation of the coming honour, he never referred to the Duc de Longueville, except as '*the King*.' On the same principle, he treated the reigning sovereign as if he had already fallen back into his private position, refused to kiss his hand, had to be dragged by force when he was summoned to dance with the Queen, and loudly complained, when the dance was over, that '*she had not taken*

off her glove.' Marysieńka, on her part, panted to return to Paris, obtain her *tabouret*, and snatch the Marquisate of Époisses from the greedy clutches of the great Condé.

But these were all dreams. Within a few days, the news of the death of the Duc de Longueville—he fell at Tolhuis on the 12th of June—reached Warsaw. The whole plan crumbled to pieces, and this time there was no possible remedy. There was nothing for it but to live in Poland, and make the best of it. So thoroughly did Marysieńka realise this fact, that Sobieski, though he had lost the king of his choice, found himself suddenly in possession of a wife as kind and tender as in the fairest moments of their honeymoon. He was overjoyed with the Heaven-bestowed compensation, and luxuriated in the delights of this un hoped-for change. *Astrea* had returned to him, and he played his old part of *Celadon* willingly enough. The couple, it is true, was forced to separate immediately. The failure of the Confederation placed all its members in a difficult, and even in a dangerous situation. *Celadon* departed to join his army, where his position would be safer, and *Astrea* took her way to her country house at Gniew, whence, in case of necessity, she could slip over into Germany at any rate, if not away to France. But 'preserves,' sweet as honey and sugar, went backward and forward between the two.

'I am almost beside myself,' he wrote, 'since our separation, for, having left the best part of me behind, I feel myself reduced to a mere fraction of a man. I had not courage, oh! my heart, to bid you farewell, nor even to look at the barge which bore you from me. Between the joy of knowing you shared my love, and the pain of parting with you, my heart was almost bursting.'

Unfortunately *Astrea* did not adhere to her new resolution. Her will, though generally strong, was always changeable. And sorrows, which soon befel her, cast a fresh gloom over her. She lost her brother, the Chevalier d'Arquien, killed at the siege of Orsoy, in the same campaign as Longueville, and then her mother, for whom she had manifested no

particular affection during life, but whose death cast her into transports of excessive grief. Everything about her was marked by exaggeration, and she had a special talent for turning her sorrows to account, as a means of plaguing others. She talked, now, of nothing but her own approaching demise, and, her husband not seeming sufficiently alarmed, she went a step further.

'Night and day my poor dead never leave me! And I cannot think of them in the darkness of the tomb, without feeling a passionate desire to join them there.' She certainly should end by attempting her own life!

She failed, this time, both in moderation and in tact. *Celadon* was still *Celadon*, when so she willed it, but he had acquired experience; he was beginning to know his *Astrea*, and possibly to appreciate her at her proper worth. All the distracted mourner contrived to elicit was a lecture or two, a certain number of reminders as to her plain duty—she had just borne a third child—and finally a tardy but conclusive reply to her own ultimatum of the preceding year. In this reply, their respective positions were clearly and definitely set forth. It was Marysieńka who made all the complaints, but it was Sobieski who really was to be pitied. For the last three months, especially, he had been leading a wretched existence, without an hour's repose, or a moment's happiness. His colleagues had cast all their duty upon him, and betaken themselves to spend the winter at Lublin, where they were making merry with *Mdlle. Concordia*, while he lived a hard life in camp, and faced all the anxiety of feeding soldiers who had been left without pay and without rations. He claimed his own just share of earthly enjoyment; but for this he looked to no one but his wife. In spite of the inclemency of the season, and the insecurity of the roads, he was about to cross the whole of Poland for the sake of seeing her, and besought her to meet him at Bromberg, in the neighbourhood of Gniew. He trusted she would not fail him.

'If I am still worthy of your caresses, this is the moment

for you to prove it to me,—for, if I were to have a fresh disappointment, it would be the last. I should devote to another all the thought and all the devotion which have been yours, together with what remains of a health already sorely shaken. Not to a low woman, be sure!—I should never find one so desirable as you—but to a mistress who, so far at least, has rewarded the efforts I have made to conquer her. Her name is Glory. Choose then, Madam, and see whether you care to preserve your *Celadon*! If you respond to his expectations, if you fly to meet his wishes, *and refuse him nothing*, you may keep him as submissive to your power, and obedient to your will, as he has been in the past.'

He did as he had said. He travelled day and night, till his escort was utterly worn out, he swam the Vistula, though the stream was thick with ice, and fought his way, sword in hand, through bands of mutinous soldiers. 'The pretty Frenchwoman must have bewitched him!' grumbled his followers. At Lowicz, on the frontier of the province in which *Astrea* was to have met him, he was stopped by a message from her. She was not coming to Bromberg. She would not even be at Gniew,—she was starting for Paris!

No explanation of this new freak would be possible, unless the fictitious and theatrical qualities of the epistolary dialogue between the husband and wife are duly taken into account. They still went on exchanging a sort of stage conversation, and, being alive—sub-consciously at all events—to this fact, they did not take each other altogether seriously. And besides, Marysieńka had reasons for failing at the *rendezvous*, just as Sobieski had others which accounted for his precipitate haste,—none of which on either side had any connection with the private feelings of the couple. It was not love alone, which had lent wings to *Celadon's* journey to Lowicz. As I have already pointed out, he had learnt wisdom in *Astrea's* school.

Lowicz was the residence of the Primate of Poland,

and to him Sobieski was bearing important news, quite independent of his personal impatience and conjugal mishaps. He and his political associates had been thrown out of countenance, for a moment, by the catastrophe at Tolhuis, but they had not been long content to regard their plans as utter failures, and permit 'the Ape,' who, as a matter of fact, was but a feeble ruler, to reign in peace. The military confederation, so long discussed and so frequently deferred, had at last been definitely formed, and proclaimed in the camp of Sczebrzeszyn, whence Sobieski had just travelled, and his first care, on reaching Lowicz, was to write to M. de Pomponne (M. de Lionne's successor), to inform him that he had crossed the Rubicon,—for the second time.

At that very instant, in fact, he was causing the crown jewels and the insignia of royalty to be seized at Cracow.

Marysieńka was well aware of all this, and between her natural excitability of temperament, and her feverish love of action and intrigue, she had convinced herself that to remain in Poland was dangerous, and that her presence in Paris was indispensable. But this plan of hers was never to be carried out. Sobieski made the strange and unlucky mistake of choosing the Marquis d'Arquien to present his letter to the French Minister. The reply was worthy of the Ambassador—so discouraging that the Grand Marshal, having perused it, thought it prudent to make his peace with King Michael, and restore him his crown and golden sceptre. *Astrea*, too, was given a hint that she had better stay where she was.

But she never saw *Celadon* again.

Whether the summons she had treated with such indifference had been all genuine or not, Sobieski was determined, now, to look on it as real, and would admit no other construction of it. And besides, this was no moment for play-acting. The victor of Podhałce stood face to face with reality, terrible and threatening, and his duty was clear before him. The country lay defenceless before the Turkish and Tartar invaders. Kamieniec, the guardian fortress of

southern Poland, had surrendered. Podolia and the Ukraine had been relinquished by a shameful treaty. It was time for *Celadon* to disappear, and for the warrior, the *ultor* invoked in the inscription on the tomb of the victim of Ceçora, to take his place.

For long months, then, he deserted the home where he had known far more bitterness than joy, and gave his whole being to that other love which he had vowed should henceforth rule him exclusively; till, having by almost superhuman efforts gathered an army of 40,000 men, he faced a force four times as numerous, on the banks of the Dniester.

It was the beginning of a splendid series of brilliant exploits.

He rose higher and higher, magnified and transfigured as it were, by the unfolding of a genius which seemed to recognise its own power, and take possession of its own faculties. He triumphed over the resistance of the Lithuanian contingent, he ruled and inspirited his followers, and carried them all with him by his vigorous speech and his determined will. 'We shall take them! Cut my head off if we do not take them!' he cried. Casting himself from the saddle, he led his attacking infantry right up to the Turkish entrenchments, and, on the very spot where his valiant ancestor Zolkiewski had succumbed, he inscribed, on the already darkening page of his unhappy country's history, a name of glory and a date of vengeance.—

CHOCIM, 10TH NOVEMBER 1673.

Ten thousand Turks and Tartars were slain. Ten thousand more were drowned in the Dniester. The whole camp, with a huge booty, was taken by the Poles, and the country was delivered from the nightmare of invasion. *A Te Deum* was sung in Hussein Pasha's own tent, and even as the triumphant chant rose on the air, an event took place at

Warsaw, which opened the victorious leader's road to that supreme reward whereof he had already dreamt.

King Michael was dead.

Glory, the fair mistress who had snatched the warrior from Marysienka's cold embrace—more tender than her rival—was already preparing a couch worthy of the lover she had won!

CHAPTER IX

QUEEN AT LAST!

- I. Another electoral campaign—French inactivity—Its causes—Tardy despatch of the Bishop of Marsilles to Poland—A revival—The same play with the same actors—Neuburg, Condé, and Lorraine—Eleanora of Austria's romance—Sobieski reserved—Marysienka more explicit—Final manœuvres—The Bishop of Marsilles in a difficulty—Between Lorraine and Sobieski—A cardinal's hat—The Ambassador pays the cash—Sobieski's election.
- II. The coronation—An evil omen—Separation—*Astrea's* tears—*Celadon* come back to life—The siege of Lemberg—Marysienka's heroism—Zurawno—A letter from the Queen—'Farewell for ever'—Quarrelling again—Reconciliation.
- III. *Astrea's* influence—Her real character—Home and foreign policy—Marysienka's cookery—Contemporary opinion—The judgment of posterity—Mutual mistakes—How caused—A promising opening—Disappointment—The ruin of Poland—Its real causes—Marysienka and the French Alliance.
- IV. The alliance opens with fair promise—The Treaty of Jaworów—A double programme—Diversions in Hungary and in Prussia—Reforms—The first disagreement—Louis XIV. as an Anarchist—The alliance reduced to the external programme—Early successes—A provoking incident—The Brisacier business—Intrigue and mystery—The secretary of Marie Thérèse—Duke Brisacier—Responsibilities—Effect of the incident on the relations between the two courts.
- V. Louis XIV. disappointed—Marysienka dissatisfied—Family difficulties—The Marquis d'Arquien—The Marquis de Béthune—Sobieski faithful to his engagements—This does not prevent the failure of the common plan—Wherefore?—The results of the third treaty of Nimeguen—France has no further need of Poland—Louis XIV. and Sobieski—A mistaken judgment—The man and the hero—The Austrian alliance—On the road to Vienna.

I

EVIL news flies on wings ; good tidings limp on lame feet. At Jaworów, where Marysienka was residing, the fresh 'widowhood of the Polish crown,' as the *Slachcice* were

fond of saying, in their flowery and pictorial language, was known before the news of the victory which was to place the 'widow' in so much better case, had been delivered. Marie Sobieska, with her usual impatience and mania for taking the initiative, despatched a courier to France without a moment's loss of time. She requested 'orders' with regard to the coming election, and pledged her 'husband's blind obedience.' On this occasion, as usual, she was over-hasty, for a knowledge of what had occurred at Chocim would probably have proved such extreme humility to be ill-placed. Only a month later, Mme. de Sévigné was to write, 'The Grand Marshal's victory has been so complete that no one doubts he will be king.' And the *Gazette de France* was to declare that 'the victor was worthy of the crown he had saved.'

The answer returned by Louis XIV. did not, we must confess, by any means reflect these comments and flattering conjectures. The Most Christian King still nursed his old grudge. Whatever any one says, he was no more than barely polite, and utterly evasive.¹

'I have considered this accident (the death of King Michael) with all the attention it deserves, at the present juncture, and would hope that its consequences may be happy for Poland. Be very sure, Madam, that nothing could be more agreeable to me, than if they were to prove advantageous to my cousin, the Grand Marshal, and to yourself.'

An attempt has been made, in later days, to read implied countenance, and even a clear avowal, in these inexplicit lines. Marysienka herself found such scant encouragement in them, that she at once returned to the charge, addressing herself, this time, to M. de Pomponne. She went

¹ For this answer, and for all the diplomatic details of my story, in this and in future chapters, I have consulted the official documents preserved in the French Foreign Office, some of them unpublished, and some published by myself, in the collection of the Cracow Academy of Sciences. (See 'List of Authorities consulted.')

so far as to write four letters, but no answer came. Jupiter had retired into Olympus, and Mercury remained there with his master. In February 1674, Sobieski and his wife and friends were still waiting for a sign, at all events, if not for a watchword from France, and were growing, so Marie Sobieska wrote, 'more and more anxious and astonished, divided between hope and fear.'

There was good cause for alarm. While Louis, wrapped in a cloud of majesty, was chewing the cud of his indignation, Leopold had taken his decision, and was boldly putting forward Charles of Lorraine once more. Now Lorraine had a better chance than before, and even a very strong one. He was openly preferred by the Queen Dowager, Eleanora, who gave ultimate proof of this fact, by marrying the man she loved. Marysieńka's was not the only romance that embellished the steep and toilsome ascent to the Polish throne.

There was some excuse, and yet another cause, for the French King's silence and inactivity. The 'heroic period' in the life of Mazarin's unruly pupil had closed. Holland was soon to be evacuated, and Turenne, closely pressed on the Rhine by Montecuccoli, had come perilously near losing Alsace. A campaign on the Vistula might fairly be considered a superfluous addition to all these difficulties. It was not till March that Louis decided to send an Ambassador to Warsaw, there to defend French interests, for better or for worse, and that M. de Forbin-Janson, Bishop of Marseilles, who had been nominated to the post, received his instructions. The king still hankered after ecclesiastical diplomacy. This preference was justified, to a certain extent, by the part played by the Polish Primates during the various interregnums. As the Diet of Election was to meet on the 20th of April, M. de Bonzy's successor had little prospect of arriving at his post in time to do much useful work. And indeed, his mission would seem to have been merely the outcome of a sort of scruple, and desire to clear his conscience, on the part of the French sovereign. The new

Ambassador was to proceed to Dantzic, inform himself as to the situation, and go forward or retire according to circumstances,—that is to say, according to whether the chances of any successful opposition to the Lorraine candidature should seem favourable or not. He was left free choice as to the methods and men to be employed in the matter. Neuburg was still officially supported by France, and was likely, it was believed, to obtain more votes, this time for the old duke was dead, and was replaced 'by a young and well-favoured prince,' who was quite ready, if necessary, to espouse the widowed Queen. Of course 'if the Poles themselves decided upon M. le Prince (Condé),' the Ambassador was to do nothing to baulk their choice.

In real truth these instructions, vague as they were, and dictated seemingly by a feeling of weariness and disgust, were a mere revival. The King and his Minister, whose imagination was exhausted, were simply playing over the piece they had acted in 1669. The very cast was the same, and even the indemnities ensured to the various actors. In any case, Sobieski, if the French policy succeeded, was to have the bâton of a Marshal of France, the Blue Ribbon, a landed property which carried a peerage with it, and a considerable sum of money—say four hundred thousand livres, in round numbers. And out of regard to the laurels won at Chocim, a special *douceur* was superadded. M. de Forbin-Janson was authorised to inform Marysienka's husband 'that His Majesty would have extreme satisfaction in seeing the Republic make amends for the unfortunate choice of the last Diet, by electing a *Piast* in his own person.'

But the King counted on the individual in question not to mistake a mere dainty trifle for a substantial dish, and felt sure the message, while it gratified him, 'would not induce him to set up any claim at the election, as every information pointed to the fact that he had no views for himself in person.'

The authorities at Versailles were not very reliably informed. The Diet was put off till the month of May, and

the Bishop of Marseilles was able, without any undue effort, to make his appearance at the most favourable moment. But his first interview with the chief actors, Sobieski and his wife, convinced the Ambassador they were no longer the couple with whom the French Government had supposed he would have to deal. Marysienka was now perfectly well aware of what the victory of Chocim meant, and her husband also had reached a far clearer comprehension of the prestige conferred on him, both in Poland and elsewhere, by his recent achievements.

All their anxiety and uncertainty seemed to have disappeared. The husband made loud professions of his devotion to the King's service, but at the first mention of Neuburg's name, he cut the conversation short, 'he would not hear a word of that despicable creature.'

Condé was mentioned, and Sobieski inquired whether the Bishop of Marseilles had authority to treat in his name, and whether he could guarantee the Prince's arrival in Poland immediately after the election. No? Then any discussion on that point was equally useless. This was clear, peremptory, and decisive. The man was utterly altered, he spoke with an assurance which he had never evidenced before. But what was his object? The Ambassador was sorely puzzled to discover it. Sobieski too, had an Olympus of his own, behind the clouds of which he had withdrawn himself. His language was as vague, and vaguer, than that of his royal cousin. He betrayed the same dislike to Lorraine as to Neuburg, talked of the hidden ways of Providence, and declared, as he had declared in 1669, that it must be as God willed. Marysienka, fortunately, was more explicit, but a heavy cloud darkened the Bishop's brow when he left her presence. This was the communication he had to transmit to his master:

'I have to inform your Majesty that the *Grande Maréchale* has positively told me that if neither the Prince of Neuburg nor Monseigneur the Prince should succeed, she thinks her own husband may be put forward.'

According to Des Noyers, who had every facility for knowing the facts, she had been thinking of it constantly, ever since 1669.

She had given the Ambassador her reasons. The army and the majority of the senators desired it. The Grand Vizier made this selection an express condition for the conclusion of an advantageous peace. The Tartars and the Elector of Brandenburg both offered their adhesion. It was clear that since France had left them to their own devices, husband and wife had sought their own path, and travelled far along it. The wife especially. She probably deceived herself, and exaggerated the elements and probabilities of success. But she was passionately eager that her husband should be King, and make her Queen, she urged and spurred him forward, and now as ever, he obeyed her.

The Bishop, bound down by his instructions, and yet more by his master's unwritten orders, thought it best to temporise. He went backwards and forwards between husband and wife, harried them with objections, and appeals to reason and prudence. He ended, as he wrote, by thinking the husband 'shaky,' but the wife 'as eager as ever.'

At the last moment, Sobieski, dragged forward on one side, and held back on the other, seemed to be following his own natural bent, and slipping down the fatal slope of concession.

It was a mere move in the game. Marysieńska never wavered, and if he paused, his final leap was all the more unerring. He could be very cunning, and skim, if he was driven to it, over the most dangerous ground, with perfect ease and skill. At his request, four Bishops bore an amicable proposal to the widowed Queen. Would she consent to marry Neuburg? This expedient would ensure an agreement between France and Austria, and the partisans of both countries. Eleanora refused, as he had confidently hoped; and he had even gone so far as to take precautions, with a view to the possibility that the young widow's ambition might override the dictates of her heart. *Celadon*

was not quite dead, perhaps, but *Astrea* had taught him to be suspicious. Before he despatched the four Bishops on their mission, he made Neuburg's Envoy give him a written undertaking, that whatever personal arrangement his master might make, he would not marry the Queen Dowager without Sobieski's own consent.

Eleanora may have been apprised of this fact before she sent her answer. It was not until after its delivery that the Bishop of Marseilles realised what the manœuvre meant for him. It put Neuburg out of the question altogether, and placed himself at the Grand Marshal's mercy. Nothing but one alternative was left him; if he did not choose to leave the field clear for Lorraine's triumph, he must help Sobieski to carry the day. He decided on this latter course; paid over the somewhat shabby sum (fifty thousand crowns) at his disposal, received the promise of a Cardinal's hat in exchange, and within a short time, Mdle. de Scudéry wrote:

'It is actually true that the Grand Marshal Sobieski is King of Poland. We have a d'Arquien Queen! I am really afraid the Marquise d'Époisses will die of joy.'

The election, which took place on May 21st, 1674, was practically unanimous, the Emperor Leopold's envoy, Schafgottsch, having deemed it inadvisable to oppose the conqueror of Hussein Pasha and victor of Chocim. The Marquise d'Époisses, who was still alive in 1674, was mother-in-law to the Comte de Guitaut, and aunt to the new Queen; she did not die of joy, but the news must have astounded her not a little. The very walls of the Château des Bordes must have trembled.

II

The coronation did not take place till February 1676, for Sobieski had first to pay the price of his crown. In spite of Marysieńka's bold assertion, the Turks, though driven back and disconcerted, did not lay down their arms, and still

threatened the country. Sobieski paid his reckoning royally in his own person ; he was more intrepid, more indifferent to his personal safety than ever, and wherever he appeared victory always followed. And he was everywhere at once, always rushing to the spot where the danger seemed most threatening. This over, he had to bury his predecessors, King Michael, and King John Casimir,—who had lately died in France. The royal entry into Cracow was preceded by two coffins—an evil omen ! Then came the traditional and indispensable pilgrimage to the tomb of St. Stanislaus. To this day, a kind of expiatory chapel marks the spot, on the outskirts of the ancient capital, where the martyr Bishop was put to death by King Boleslas, six hundred years before Sobieski's time. A great man, after his kind, this Boleslas must have been, so far as we may guess by the hazy stories preserved by contemporary chroniclers. A man who probably had reason, reasons of state at all events, on his side, but whose unlucky fate it was to employ violent means, and fail thereby to reach success. On this occasion, the slayer was not the victor, and from this period the martyrology of the Polish Kings begins. John Sobieski, like all his predecessors, bowed head and knee before the turbulent Bishop's victorious and avenging shade. At last, the cathedral opened its doors to receive the new-made sovereigns. Marysienka was crowned with her husband. Gold and silver medals, bearing a sword wreathed with laurels, and carrying on its point a crown, with the inscription, *Per has ad islam*, were scattered to the people. But the Turks still hovered on the frontier, and from the very door of the cathedral King John III. was constrained to betake himself back to his army. He was shortly to renew his exploit at Podhaŕce, and shut himself up with his troops in his fortified camp at Zurawno.

Marysienka wept abundantly. Since Sobieski had set her on a throne and enabled her to write 'my brother' to the King who had refused her a *tabouret*, the air of Poland had seemed less trying to her health, and her husband's habits

of intemperance far less offensive to her delicacy. She was beginning to look up to the man who had lifted her so high, and even to feel a certain sense of gratitude towards him. She was growing older, too, and the homage of other men had fewer charms for her. In short, *Astrea* had ceased her search for another *Celadon*. She had the rare felicity of restoring the original to life, after her own hands had slain him. The first appeal from a voice which, to his ears, still rang with the magic music of old days, brought him back to her feet. There was a touch of clumsiness, perhaps, in his playing of a part scarce suited to his forty years and heroic build, a shade of absurdity sometimes, but he was still loveably simple, astoundingly eager, touching and comical, in a breath.

In June 1675 he is at Lemberg. From the summit of a steep hill overlooking the far spreading country, his eye follows the clouds, fast scudding out of sight. Whither does the wind carry them? Towards Jaroslaw, where he has left *Astrea*. And forthwith he writes; 'How I wish I could turn myself into one of these dew-drops, so that with it I might traverse space, and fall upon your feet! You love to walk out of doors under the rain!'

At Willanów, a royal residence near Warsaw, the legend concerning Marysieńka's taste for walking in the heaviest rain is still preserved. It was one of the strange creature's fancies—some of them were far less innocent!

Yet a few steps further in the reopening romance which was to find its way back to the flowery paths of bygone summers, I see a fresh reference to a bracelet woven from the lady's hair. *Celadon* has left his at Cracow, and petitions for another. *Astrea* plays the coquette, as usual, and objects. 'She has not enough hair left. She will soon be frightful.' 'No matter!' he replies; so she gives way, and he falls into ecstasies over the delicacy of its texture and the skill of the dainty fingers which have woven it together. 'He knows their magic power.' But was that power so great? I see them beckoning *Celadon* back to her side, and

behold! he does not stir an inch. 'No,' comes the answer, 'if I were able to obey, even a single one of your dainty hairs would suffice to draw me to your side. But I must not! The siege of the town is just beginning. Would you have me forsake it? Ah! let us cling together, at all events, in soul, and mind, and imagination, and will, and heart, and all that I have devoted to you, oh! my only lady! You are my true kingdom, and there only would I reign!'

No! *Astrea's* magic cannot make *Celadon* forswear honour or duty for her sake. And now we see him, too,—changed as he is, raised to the level of his splendid destiny—working a miracle. He wrests his share of sovereignty, even in that sphere of tenderness, wherein so many monarchs have been weak.

The hero is to make her almost a heroine. She grows anxious, insists on his telling her 'on his word of honour,' how many men are with him, and how many enemies he has to face. He avoids giving a definite reply. She, ill as she is, and about to become a mother, hurries to his side. A splendid siege, in faith! a noble victory! She, on that 24th of August, spent the hours kneeling on the church-flags, weeping and praying. He sallied from the town with a few squadrons of horse, and the enemy, terrified by the mere sight of him, fled, almost without a blow.

A glorious day indeed! Why, alas! was it doomed to have no morrow? Within a few months, the lately reconciled lovers are floundering in a fresh slough of disagreement. We even hear talk of a downright rupture. On whose side? On *Astrea's* again! The metamorphosis, in her case, has not lasted long. Mutability was the very essence of the lady's composition. 'She will make every possible effort to cure herself of the unlucky affection she still had for *Celadon*; she trusts she will soon attain indifference! He is free to seek elsewhere for the tenderness, the pleasures, and passionate delights, he had once found in her company.' In other words and for the second time, she offers him *carte blanche*. His reply thrills with indignation. 'You know well

enough that such a thought fills me with horror. If you drive me from your bed you make me a desperate man!’

He pleaded his cause with admirable gravity, writing under the blaze of the conflagration kindled round his camp by the approaching enemy, for he was at Zurawno, and for many weeks he was to be hemmed in and imprisoned, outnumbered ten to one, relying on his own patience and courage to help him out, but exposed to all the risks of capture in a fatal trap. As soon as his letter was finished, he was going to take horse, and endeavour to drive back the enemy's bands, which were pressing him closely. The sortie would give him a chance of despatching his missive. ‘Farewell,’ it closes, ‘the Tartars are there. I must go and receive them!’ He mounts his horse and is riding off, when a messenger approaches. ‘What is it?’ he inquires. ‘A letter from the Queen,’ smuggled through the enemy's lines. Feverishly, his hand trembling with emotion, he breaks the seal, and reads. ‘This is the end, I have achieved my desire—to wean myself completely from you. My heart is utterly turned, and can never change again. Farewell, perhaps for ever!’

He turned pale, his horse reared under the convulsive clutch of his hand upon the rein. Those about him thought he would have fallen backward. Corpulent beyond what was natural at his age, full-blooded, thick-necked, and short-breathed, he seemed threatened, for a moment, with a fit of apoplexy. But within an instant he had recovered himself, and the Tartars derived no benefit from his momentary weakness. No further sign of it, indeed, was to appear in the intercourse between the couple. Yet once again, they had been merely play-acting. *Astrea*, we must acknowledge, had not been well-inspired. Yet occasionally she must have had the happiest thoughts, and discovered absolutely triumphant situations. For in answer to a letter written fully five years later, in which she expresses a belief that she is forgotten, ‘for it is autumn time with me now,’ he replies, ‘Autumn, in your case, would be as fair as spring, but you

have not reached autumn yet ! I see nothing but a glorious summer, or rather, when I think of you, all seasons are alike to me ! I love you, as I loved you the first day !' She was forty, and he fifty. Surely, if their love had endured so long, she must have given proof of other qualities besides the spiteful temper of which, unhappily, she has remained the notorious personification in all Polish eyes.

III

From this time forward, on the whole, and in spite of a storm here and there, the couple were most united, and one feels inclined to say 'they lived very happily, and had a great many children.'

Between 1667, when the little James was born, until 1682, Marysieńka bore a child almost every year, and she appears to have become a mother once again, in 1694. This makes up a total of fifteen or sixteen boys and girls—counting the three children born to Zamoyski. Six of these survived, three sons and three daughters. Where peace is so frequently made there can be no very serious breach. If these married lovers' quarrels appear grievously important, the fact must be ascribed to their pertinacious mania for introducing the conditions and situations, the procedure and the formulas, of free love, into the married state. Nevertheless, often as they were parted by the necessities of their rank, they practically lost no opportunity of returning to each other's company, and *Astrea*, whether absent or present, certainly exercised an influence over *Celadon* which, though opinions may differ as to the degree of its harmfulness, all parties have acknowledged to be paramount.

This influence must here be shortly explained, for it has an important place in the manuals of history by means of which the youth of my native country make acquaintance with the fair Frenchwoman. The fact of its existence cannot be controverted. It is certain, for instance, that if it had not been for Marysieńka, Sobieski would have shown less willingness in the matter of supplying the place of the

Polish Cromwell, in 1665, and it is probable, also, that but for her he might have failed to secure the succession of King Michael in 1674. But in both these cases, I cannot see that she affected his will otherwise than by what I will call an *a posteriori* action. She stimulated, but she did not direct it. This has not been the general view. She has been looked upon as the directress of her husband's policy, before and after 1674, and consequently as having swayed the policy of the country of her adoption, after that date. She it was, we are told, who took it into her head to repudiate the French alliance in 1681, and thus, at one blow, to destroy the hopes and plans dependent upon it, both within the country and beyond its frontiers—hopes and plans which, if successful, might, perhaps, have saved Poland from ruin. She it was, we are further assured, who sent her husband to the walls of Vienna in 1683, and who, but a short while afterwards, prevented him from reaping the advantage of a fresh agreement with the Court of Versailles. Everything, in short, is ascribed to her, and the result of her inspirations, it is averred, was worthy of their source—as pitiful, in fact, as it was narrow-minded and paltry.

I have the greatest respect for other people's opinion, but at the same time I have no hesitation in making my protest when that opinion runs counter to my own. Now I do not believe one word of the accusations thus brought against Marysieńka, and this for many reasons, of which the foremost is that I do not believe she possessed the capacity necessary to her having deserved them. She had a policy of her own, poor lady, there can be no doubt of that. I cannot conceive that it can have influenced Sobieski, even for four and twenty hours, in the performance of his duties as a soldier and a king. Her political method was summed up by Louis XIV. himself, before the year 1674. 'No abbey, no quarter! No Époisses, no quarter! No such another thing, no quarter!' And there it was in a nutshell. She knew what she wanted, and she asked for it! And what did she want? Everything she thought within her reach, and her

range of vision, her discernment, and her reasonableness always remained on a par with that of those bewitching little creatures whom we dandle on our knees, until we grovel at their feet. Thus, she fought for a *tabouret* until she was in a position to struggle for a crown. And in each case she showed the same greediness, and the same amount of ability.

After 1674, the same thing continues, with scarcely a shade of difference. On the very morrow of the great event, we find the husband and wife each playing their separate parts in politics, as in other matters. Poland is on the best of terms with France, matters go swimmingly, and King and Queen both hold conversations with the French Ambassador. Sobieski speaks of his wishes and his needs—the subsidies required before the war with the Turks can be concluded the necessary alliance with Sweden against Brandenburg, the recovery of the provinces stolen by the Prussians, and reforms within the country's border. These are the things he desires. Then Marysieńka begins, and her list suffices to demonstrate my theory. 'Her father must be made a Duke and Peer of France; she must have a regiment for her second brother, the Comte de Maligny; a German servant, who is robbing the Marquis d'Arquien, must be turned out of his house.' So far in external matters. Her home policy is simpler yet. She has carefully pondered the counsel bestowed on Marie de Gonzague by M. de Brégy, as to the 'perquisites' on which Queens of Poland might fairly reckon, and forthwith puts it into practice, with a zeal which is never to flag so long as she remains on the throne. She lays her hand on every source of profit dependent on the crown, and the consequent traffic occupies the greater portion of her time.

She does indeed assist her husband occasionally and incidentally, in the performance of the essential functions which have devolved upon him. Isolated and overburdened as he is, he makes some of them over to her from time to time, in a fashion more commonplace than majestic, simply because he has too much upon his hands. She helps him in his

work, and puts her hand to the terribly *bourgeois* cookery expected from the 'chef' of a popular State like Poland. The King had Ministers, indeed, but most of them had once been his colleagues, and some of them his actual superiors. He had no power to choose them, unless a vacancy occurred, nor to change them once he had appointed them. They were permanent and independent functionaries, and the reader may well imagine how much or little service, or satisfaction, they rendered to their master. In nine cases out of ten they could only skim saucepans, like Morsztyn, or smash plates, like Lubomirski. Marysienka herself was an incorrigibly careless cook. She would let the fire out, overthrow the pots and pans, mix the wrong condiments, and even deliberately make a mess of everything. But at all events she never did it spitefully, and for the most part she only abused the powers her husband confided to her for the purpose of stewing some fanciful dish of her own, which might, indeed, complicate the bill of fare, but by no means altered the general order of the feast. It is no fault of hers, I dare swear, that Poland has succumbed to a political indigestion!

On the whole, I really believe the poor lady has been the victim, historically speaking, of an optical delusion. Brilliantly as John Sobieski's reign began, its promise never was fulfilled, either within Poland or beyond its borders. The lost frontiers were never re-conquered, and internal anarchy never was suppressed. Vienna was saved for Austria, but Kiew was ceded to the Muscovite, and that fact balances the whole transaction. Where does the blame lie? Sobieski was a great warrior. Both contemporary opinion and that of posterity have regarded him, and this without too close an examination, as a great statesman likewise. This may have been a mistake. I think it likely, seeing that for many years I myself shared the common error. Who then prevented him, in spite of all his genius, from saving his country?

Marysienka was never popular, and no one can blame Poland for this fact. There, as in France, her fellow-country-

men hated her, judged her harshly, and did not even hesitate to slander her. In 1676, Baluze, the French agent, well aware, I am convinced, that he was repeating or inventing lies, wrote thus to his own country:—

‘The King takes pains to do nothing that the Queen desires; and has said pretty openly that people must apply to him direct, and not to her. . . . In vain does she spend four hours a day in dressing herself up, and use every art to please him. He despises her, and treats her in the roughest and strangest fashion.’

Two years previously, this same Baluze had announced that when the Queen’s life was reported to be in danger, in consequence of an attempt to poison her, there was general rejoicing. When the French missionaries, whom she patronised, had attempted to offer prayers for her recovery, the congregation had protested. The people would have been glad to see her dead, and the King married to the Austrian, Eleanora, rather than be saddled with the hated Frenchwoman, who held the occupant of the throne in leading-strings.

Her husband died before her, and the outcry still continued. The country, in its disappointment, looked about for a scapegoat, and fell upon the wife. The details of the strange romance which had bound *Celadon* under the yoke of *Astrea* were all unknown, as yet. Their correspondence was not published until 1859, and then only in part, and with numerous excisions. When it appeared, sentence was passed at once. Marysienka was looked on as a monster, and her husband was taken as a terrifying instance of a man on whom God had bestowed the highest gifts, ruined by the artifices of the devil, or shall we say by a she-devil? Yet one trifling fact would appear to have escaped these merciless judges’ wisdom. *Celadon*, like all lovers, delighted in the details of his commerce with the object of his adoration. He took the trouble, one day, to reckon up the number of his happy moments—I mean those spent in the company of *Astrea*. Adding hours and even minutes

together, he arrived, so he declared, at a total of a few months only, in six years of married life! And in all conscience, he could not blame the lady alone for this. She left him occasionally, but he left her far oftener. That 'exquisite hell' which contained all his happiness, as he was never tired of saying, did not, then, hold or imprison him so absolutely that he could not escape from it now and again, and take his road to paradise. We should find it difficult to discover a single occasion on which *Celadon* dallied at *Astrea's* feet, when the soldier-king's duty summoned him elsewhere.

I would fain believe he has reached heaven long ago, and rests there contentedly, after his arduous labours. *Marysienka*, as we shall see, had her hours of regret, and I am sure, of repentance, even here on earth. I am convinced she is united to her husband now. Perhaps they are suffering their purgatory together! As for Poland, if hell has triumphed in that country, the Poles in general seem to me no more responsible for that, than this brave Polish warrior in particular. The real guilt lies in another quarter.

Sobieski did not recover *Kamieniec* from the Turks, nor *Królewiec* (now known as *Königsberg*) from the Prussians, because his army was a bad one. And his army was bad because the Poles objected to having a better—just as in these days the English nation objects to compulsory service. He did not succeed, either, in reforming the government of his country, because he was not the man for doing that kind of work. He was too weak, too careless, too much of the Polish nobleman (for which read 'Anarchist') himself, and his seat upon the throne was too near the bed of idleness and moral debauchery on which his youth had idled away its days. His kingship was nothing but a name. Why then was he chosen King? Would Poland have had better fortune under another man? I doubt it. His successor was very different from himself. He was strong, bold, enterprising, cynical, cunning, without law or gospel, filled with all the traditions of despotic government, and able to

back them with the best mercenary troops in Europe. His name was Augustus the Strong, and the only surviving memory of his reign is that he was still drinking steadily when all the rest of Poland was dead drunk !

Certain maladies are utterly incurable. Consumption is one of these. And, even in the sixteenth century, Poland was in consumption. There were Polish kings in the fifteenth century, who were far inferior to Sobieski; yet, after the annexation of Lithuania, they added Prussia and Pomerania to their provinces; Polish towns prospered, and a Cracow merchant welcomed the Emperor Charles IV. and his following of ten European princes to his table. This merchant, whose name was Wierzynek, had no successors, and his house fell into bankruptcy. He had lived, and grown rich, upon the great Oriental trade which the Crusaders had driven from the sea, and forced through Cracow and Lemberg. The close of the Crusades, the taking of Constantinople by the Turks, and the discovery of America, checked the stream, and the ruin of Poland was the ultimate result. The Polish plains, empty, deserted, and untilled, as they soon became, could not support the mighty empire set up by the Piasts and the Jagellons. The miracle is that it held together for so long. This never could have been, but for the aid of generations of heroes such as Sobieski. They were men of loose life, these heroes—undisciplined, untameable. Would you expect to find sublime genius in the soul of a German corporal? Poland was fated by heaven to live on heroism, and die of it.

Read the book of Fate: the true culprit is clearly written there.

But might France have helped Marysienka's husband to carry out the double programme, external and internal, on which he wore out his life in vain? And did not Marysienka, out of mere spite and folly, prevent such intervention? Several times France has endeavoured, more or less seriously, and more or less sincerely, to play the part of Don Quixote in Poland. On every such occasion, I believe, France would

have done better to have stayed quietly at home. This was what she elected to do in Sobieski's time. Why? Because the Great King refused to make the Marquis d'Arquien a Duke? or because he would not recall the Marquise de Béthune from exile? or allow Marysieńka to take the Bourbon waters? This has been asserted, and the assertion is held almost sacred in Polish history and tradition. But that does not make it true. The idea that Marysieńka threw the French alliance out of window like a dish of sour milk is absolutely laughable. As we are upon the subject, I will endeavour to set forth the true facts of the case.

IV

Just after the election of 1674, the Court of Versailles and the new Court at Warsaw were on terms that bordered on intimacy. Louis XIV., without a moment's hesitation, ratified every step taken by his ambassador. He abstained, indeed, from calling his Polish brother 'Your Majesty,' but agreed that Marysieńka should be crowned, as if she had been his daughter, and she poured forth her grateful thanks for the 'very obliging' interest the Most Christian King condescended to manifest in her elevation. The Bishop of Marseilles was given a coadjutor in the person of the Marquis de Béthune, the new Queen's brother-in-law; and it was understood that an arrangement was to be made for common action in North-western Europe. What form was this action to take? The idea of the King of France was that Poland should settle matters with the Turk as quickly as possible, and then turn her arms either against the Emperor, or against the Elector of Brandenburg. To support this traditional *diversion*, his Majesty offered subsidies, and, as usual, suggested the Swedish Alliance. Sobieski was very willing to accept the arrangement. The idea of attacking the Emperor, in the very uncertain hope of recovering Silesia (an ancient Polish province, whatever modern German historians may say), seemed to him altogether too great an

undertaking. The utmost he could hope to effect in that direction, was to inconvenience Leopold, by supporting the Hungarian malcontents, and utilising his own *starosty* of Spiz, which lay on the frontier, for that purpose. On the other hand, if the Swedes gave him armed assistance, he could easily rout the Prussians, and then fall on the rear of the Muscovites, who were also threatening him. Success in this undertaking would ensure him sufficient strength and prestige to enable him to set his hand to the internal reforms of his country, and render his power hereditary and absolute.

It was on this last point that the hitch occurred. The ambassadors dropped the conversation, referred to Versailles, and received the following reply—

‘I think such a change would not serve my interests in any way:—rather the reverse. Avoid the subject.’

This was clear enough. France, with scant generosity, it must be said, but with much practical good sense, refused to correct faults of which she was the first to reap the advantage. Poland, ill-governed, and weak therefore, but, therefore also, docile, suited her well enough, and she desired no change. In his own country Louis XIV. was an absolute monarch. In Poland he was all for anarchy. I refuse to write down this to him as a crime. Every one, or nearly every one, is agreed, nowadays, that the virtues which most honour humanity are individual and not collective, and that the best methods of internal government will not always bear exportation.

None the less true is it that, from Sobieski's point of view, the first breach in the Alliance was made by France, and France alone. This did not prevent the Polish King from endeavouring to carry out the second part of the double programme, which he believed it to involve. On the 13th of June 1675 he signed the Treaty of Jaworów, which gave him a subsidy of two hundred thousand livres to finish matters with the Turks, and an annual subsidy of two hundred crowns ‘to retrieve the Duchy of Prussia from the vassal who has wrested it away.’ In October

1676 he made a treaty with the Sultan and the Khan, at Zurawno, and in August 1677 he arranged a plan of campaign, in conjunction with Sweden, directed to the recovery of the Prussian province. At the same time the Marquis de Béthune took possession of the *starosty* of Spiz, with the object to which we have already referred. Everything seemed to be going smoothly, when a strange, and to this day a very mysterious incident disturbed the preparations, and checked all combined action. To this I must give a moment's attention. Puerile as it is, it has its instructive, and also its amusing side.

In the month of April 1676, when the King of France was in Flanders with his army, a certain Béraut, who asserted himself to be the King of Poland's Resident, presented himself to the monarch with a petition. His first words brought a frown to Louis XIV.'s Olympian brow. Here was fresh worry about the Marquis d'Arquien, whom the Queen of Poland was determined should be made a duke. But the agent made a discreet gesture of protest. He was, indeed, commanded to ask for a peerage, but he did not know for whom it was intended. A blank patent was what was specially desired. The request was most extraordinary. But the necessity of preserving the Polish Alliance appeared pressing, and M. de Pomponne received orders to prepare the document, while Béraut was authorised to take measures for the purchase of a landed property, to be attached to the new title, of which the Queen of Poland was to dispose as she thought fit. And thus it came about that, between Marysienka's unseasonable longings and the great King's delay in satisfying them, France and Poland fell out.

In September, the landed property (that of Rieux, in Brittany), valued at five hundred and four thousand livres, was duly purchased, the necessary funds having been previously deposited with Maitre Ogix, a Paris notary. The ultimate ownership was still concealed. But just at this moment, Béraut requested an audience, at Versailles,

for a Carmelite monk, lately arrived from Poland, with orders to reveal the secret. And the King learnt, to his unspeakable amazement, that he had bestowed his duchy and his peerage on one of his humblest subjects, a certain Brisacier, private secretary to Queen Marie Thérèse, at the modest salary of nine hundred livres a year.

What was the man's origin? His father had been 'Intendant des Finances,' and, according to the Abbé Choisy, Colbert, by one stroke of his pen, had deprived him of a yearly income of fifty thousand livres of the King's money, in spite of the fact that Brisacier had given him a bribe of twenty thousand livres before entering on his new office. The son was believed to have lost all the father's fortune. A relation or connection of his, M. de Garsaulan, had lived in Poland, in Marie de Gonzague's time, and married one of the Queen's maids of honour. It had always been believed that personal jealousy had something to do with the Queen's approval of this marriage. In 1663, an Abbé *de Brisacier* had been employed by the King of France to manage a religious house in Switzerland. He had enjoyed a certain amount of the royal confidence, and received his orders direct from His Majesty. This is all the information I can gather.

The Carmelite monk gave his name as Du Montet, and presented a letter from the King of Poland, in which the monarch gave pledges for his messenger's veracity. According to this missive, Sobieski declared that he had recognised, in Brisacier's person, the scion of an ancient Polish house, related to his own—which fact induced him to send to Madame Brisacier, by the same bearer, her patent as '*First Lady of Poland, of the Golden Key*.' What was the meaning of it all? Louis XIV., with great wisdom and true dignity, dismissed the messenger without betraying any symptom of his real sentiments, and wrote to Poland to request an explanation. The result was yet more surprising.

Du Montet had really travelled from Poland. He had long been known there, under the name of Father Joseph,

an unfrocked monk, and a thorough-going specimen of his kind. But he had been in France quite recently, just previous to a journey which he had taken in September 1675, to the city of Lemberg. There he had found the Queen of Poland with the Bishop of Marseilles, the King being with his army on the Dniester. Armed with a letter to the ambassador from the Duchesse d'Angoulême, and another from Mme. Robin,—one of her confidential correspondents in Paris,—for Marysienka, he had requested an audience. This being refused, he had not persisted, and leaving all his baggage in the town, under the care of two comrades he had picked up on his road—one of them a goldsmith, and the other a hairdresser—he had travelled to Sobieski's quarters. Sobieski began by telling the monk to take himself back to his cloister, but a courier who had hurried to Lemberg on the traveller's heels recalled the sovereign's attention to his person. The Queen besought the King to be on his guard, and to avoid an interview with the monk, at any cost. What did it mean? What discovery concerning this unknown individual could have disturbed Marysienka so deeply?

This is what had happened at Lemberg. After Du Montet's departure, the Bishop of Marseilles had heard some very alarming talk about the man. His own conversation had been suspicious. He had declared he was summoned to Poland to discharge the important functions of tutor to the Prince Royal, and was intrusted, over and above, with an especially delicate and important mission. Was this a diplomatic rival? The Bishop had enough of that sort of thing with the Marquis of Béthune. Perhaps he was nothing but an impudent impostor! He lost no time about warning the Queen. Marysienka's delight at the appearance of so savoury and full-bodied a dish of intrigue may well be imagined. Her first thought was to keep it out of *Celadon's* hands; her second may be easily conceived: an order from the customs officers promptly placed the traveller's luggage, and its guardians, under lock

and key. Either the men knew nothing, or they refused to reveal anything whatever. The opening of the packages resulted in astounding revelations. Marysienka condescended to thrust her own pretty fingers into their contents, and the first thing she extracted was a portrait of Queen Marie Thérèse, 'rather larger than a man's hand, and very well set with a quantity of precious stones.' After this came 'an inkstand set with diamonds, some very fine seals, and several other jewels, all of them, apparently, of Spanish origin.' The face of the ambassador, who was present at the operation, grew black as thunder. This was a more serious business than he had supposed. Marysienka beamed. But she would not have *Celadon* mixed up in the matter. She would see when the King came back how this discovery could best be turned to account. She had the boxes 'neatly mended,' set the goldsmith and the hairdresser at liberty, and despatched the courier who was to prevent Sobieski from spoiling her entertainment.

The result of her expedient was quite contrary to what she had expected. *Celadon*, in his turn, grew puzzled. To satisfy his curiosity, without running counter to *Astrea's* will, he ordered one of his closest comrades to cross-question the monk. The traveller then produced a third letter, destined to open every door, and ensure him every one's confidence. It was signed 'Marie Thérèse, Queen of France.'

In general terms, Her Majesty requested the King of Poland's good offices in favour of a servant of her own, who was thoroughly worthy of them, and whose name was M. Brisacier. For further details the Queen referred him to the bearer of the letter, for whose absolute credibility she pledged herself.

Another letter from Her Majesty, received through the official channels, chanced to be in the King's possession. The signatures were carefully compared, and left no doubt as to the authenticity of the missive. The King could not do otherwise than receive the messenger at once. But this

personage made his own conditions. There must be no witnesses, and he must have a formal promise that nothing of what he said was to be revealed to any one, and more particularly to the two French ambassadors. All his stipulations were agreed to. And King John's surprise, when he found himself face to face with the monk, equalled that experienced by King Louis. He heard that this Brisacier, in whom the wife of the most potent sovereign in Europe took so deep an interest, was a Pole, like himself, belonging to one of the greatest families in the country, allied to those of Belz and Lançkorona, and even to his own. One of his ancestors had followed Henri de Valois into France, and there the family had dwindled into obscurity. It was the King of Poland's mission to put an end to this condition, by lending his aid to obtain the creation of a ducal peerage, which should enable the present representative of the fallen family to resume his former rank, under the ancient name of *Brisacierski*. He had already been raised, by the Queen's favour, to the position of 'Fifth Councillor of State.'

It is not easy to conceive the thoughts which must have passed through Sobieski's mind as he listened to this story, and looked at the genealogical tree by which Du Montet endeavoured to support it. He can have felt no doubt as to the reliableness of either. The humblest Polish gentleman of that period—Republican citizen though he was—carried the complete heraldry of his country in his head, and in that roll the name of Brisacier had never figured. We shall never know what the King thought. What he did was certainly not the wisest thing he might have done. We have seen the course pursued by Louis XIV. when he stood face to face with the same enigma. But Sobieski was not Louis XIV. His genius, probably, was far greater, but, in knowledge of a sovereign's duties, he was a child beside him. Marie Thérèse's signature was genuine, and the statement for which she pledged herself must, in spite of its undoubted falsehood and absurdity, have seemed, in his eyes, to call for respectful

treatment. He attached the monk to his person, used him 'with politeness,' and ended by sending him back to France, bearing the object of his quest—the blank patent which was to create a Duke *Brisacierski*. Did he never mention the subject to any one? No, since he had given his word. Did he not even demand fuller information, and further pledges, from Marie Thérèse? We do not know. Five months—those between November 1675 and April 1676—elapsed between Du Montet's appearance in Sobieski's camp, and the visit to the army in Flanders. What occurred during that interval? Echo answers, what? Seeing how long the business dragged on before any absolute decision was taken, it is exceedingly probable that Sobieski did write to Paris. To whom did he address himself, and what answer did he receive?

Coyer and Salvandy, in spite of all their efforts to discover an explanation, have found nothing better than the well-known fable of a meeting between Sobieski and Brisacier's mother, the memory of which Du Montet recalled to the Polish King, when he brought the 'Fifth Councillor of State' to His Majesty's notice, and declared his existence due to the incident. This story quite lacks corroboration. Nothing in the piles of diplomatic correspondence on the subject in the least confirms it. On the contrary, the King of Poland definitely affirms, several times over, that he never heard the name of Brisacier until he gave audience to Du Montet, and asserts that his only motive had been to oblige the Queen of France. No reference, good or bad, to Mme. Brisacier's reputation is made at all.

This supposition is overthrown, and the difficulty of finding any other solution increased, by other causes besides Sobieski's downright assertions. Marysienka, too, was mixed up in the business. As my readers will readily imagine, *Celadon* had not kept his secret from *Astrea*. The King, after exacting 'horrible oaths,' had told her everything. She probably knew all the circumstances long before the month of April. Did she make no effort to clear them up? Did she

not seek the assistance of her friends, her relations, her usual confidants and agents in Paris? Did she offer no protest?

And then we have the Bishop of Marseilles, whose conduct baffles all conjecture. Here we have the most inconceivable behaviour that can well be imagined. One thing alone is certain. On the 3rd of April 1676, if not sooner, the ambassador, after a lengthy conference with the King and Queen of Poland, was fully informed upon the whole matter. Between then and the following September he had plenty of time to write to France, and did, in fact, so write. How then was it that on the 17th of September—the day on which Du Montet was received in audience at Versailles—the French King was taken unawares? It would appear that, though the ambassador never missed a post, though every week he wrote most voluminous despatches, full of news and details of every kind—often the most trivial—never but once did he refer to the extraordinary intrigue of which Brisacier was the hero, and that particular despatch, dated the 5th of April, never reached its destination! It was intercepted. How, or why, we know not. Not one of the other missives sent by the ambassador during that year met the same unlucky fate. But how came it that so important a despatch was not intrusted to a special messenger? It was so intrusted, and most carefully. What became of the messenger, then? He reached the end of his journey in perfect safety, with all the documents which had been confided to him, save the one on account of which he had been specially despatched. This, at least, is the version put forward by the ambassador, in his own defence. It may be true. But how is it that when he received no answer nor instructions on the subject, either by the ordinary post or by his special couriers, he did not, after a month or two, refer again to the matter in his correspondence? He never made another sign. During six whole months he held his peace, and never troubled his head further about Brisacier and his strange pretensions, or the monk and his singular enterprise. I say it again, the whole thing is inexplicable. And even this is not all.

By the month of September the plotters—served by a most astounding complicity of circumstances, moral and material—had driven their mine right up to Versailles, and exploded it before the King's astonished eyes. But he, from the first, showed his determination to clear the matter up. He was resolved to get to the bottom of it all, and execute justice on the culprits. Before long, information came pouring in from every quarter. The Bishop of Marseilles, sharply cross-questioned, broke silence at last. M. de Béthune, who had left Poland for a time, and but lately returned there, sent word he was on the track of the 'frightful knavery' which had flourished during his absence. And the Queen of Poland herself contributed letters of the most explicit nature. A flood of light broke upon the scene. 'The King of Poland has been imposed upon.' Brisacier and his accomplices were all impostors. The Queen of France had never dreamt of making her secretary a duke, nor even a 'Fifth Councillor of State'; she had never written a line, nor had anything to do with the intrigue. This M. de Pomponne roundly declared. The culprits were summoned to the minister's presence. They were evidently doomed to leave it safely handcuffed, and on their way to the Bastille, and thence to the Place de Grève. For they were guilty of the crime of forging the royal handwriting, of swindling, and high treason, all twice told.

But lo! within a few months the prisoners were at large. In December the monk was back in Poland, and struggling to circumvent Marysienka's husband by bribing one of his secretaries. Brisacier came close on his heels, on the plea that he was travelling into Russia, and Bérault was released, and soon deep in fresh intrigues. Had the King of Poland intervened in the rascal's favour? No indeed! He had found it somewhat difficult to admit that the whole mysterious story had been a false, trumped up, and downright invention. The diamonds round the picture of Marie Thérèse had not been false—Marysienka had taken the precaution of making sure of that. Brisacier had not a halfpenny in the

world. Whence, then, had the jewels come? Not to speak of the five hundred thousand livres paid into the hands of the Paris notary! M. de Béthune himself did not know what to think, for 'the sight of an expenditure of forty thousand francs—not reckoning the jewels, which have been valued here at forty-two thousand crowns—and of a man who has nothing in the world buying a property worth five hundred thousand livres, quite surpasses my imagination!' He even went so far as to venture on some odd conjectures. 'Might not this man, who is well known in Spain as the Queen's secretary, be wretch enough to keep up a correspondence which brings him in this return? The Spaniards have spent their money less wisely, more than once or twice.' Sobieski may therefore be forgiven if he hesitated before he avowed himself convinced. But, with his usual good nature and good sense, he soon acknowledged he had been fooled, and turned his back on the impostors who had fooled him. As for Marysieńka, she went much further, boldly answering all M. de Pomponne's declarations, and trying to prove that her husband had nothing to do with the 'fraud,' and that he had neither written nor signed anything at all. His signature to the documents which had empowered Brisacier to enter into negotiations with Mme. du Plessis de Guénégaude for the purchase of Rieux was a forgery, and so were the letters-patent by which the King of Poland had acknowledged the impostor to be his kinsman, and raised his mother to the position of 'Lady of the Golden Key,' 'a title,' so the Queen declared, 'which has never been heard of in this country, where no ladies of honour exist, except those who wait on the Queen, and no Golden Key whatsoever'; adding that 'these people might have forged the sovereign's name and seal, or bribed some under-secretary with money'; and that, as a matter of fact, 'since that time, several gifts and confirmations of false privileges, in which the name and seal of his Polish Majesty had been forged, had come to light, and several persons had been severely punished in consequence.' Béraut, it was

asserted, had usurped the title of Resident, which he had ventured to put forward, and the very diamonds surrounding the miniature of Marie Thérèse were proclaimed false, 'most of them having been discovered to be *pierres du Temple*.' Even the hard cash supposed to have been deposited with Maître Ogix withered suddenly away, like autumn leaves. Mme. de Guénégaude and her lawyer had accepted the King of Poland's name as their sole and sufficient guarantee.

In Poland then, as in France, the whole thing was an imposture and an invention. In Poland, as in France, this fact was universally admitted, and yet in Poland, as in France, the impostors and forgers were left unpunished. In Poland, the Bishop of Marseilles and M. de Béthune did demand the arrest of Du Montet, whose presence in the country, and even in the Queen's apartments, was an established fact. But Sobieski would only promise to make him leave the country. 'He did not wish to have him arrested, because he did not choose to be the cause of the punishment which he would doubtless receive.' And further, why had they not arrested him in France? He had been allowed to leave that country after his 'fraud' had been discovered, had travelled through Holland and Germany 'with three other persons, well provided and without any secrecy.' He still talked big, declared the *Gazette de Hollande* was in his pay, and showed no signs of anxiety whatever. The news of Brisacier's arrest had not disturbed him; 'the Queen of France would make those who forgot the duty they owed her repent it bitterly, some day.' He always had 'plenty of money,' so the two ambassadors averred, and always, as they declared, asserted 'that he had acted on serious orders given him by Her Majesty's (Marie Thérèse) own lips, at the Convent of the *Petites Carmélites*. . . . He said a thousand things about the King (Louis XIV.) which no one would care to write . . . making a number of tolerably probable assertions which Christian charity must, however, prevent us from repeating.' And events seem to have justified his insolent assurance, for Brisacier was released after a few days'

imprisonment. He afterwards pursued his adventurous career in Russia, and there died, while he was endeavouring to discover the road to India.¹

What was the meaning of it all? What supposition can we set up? The diplomatic documents which I have quoted do give us an indication. I have been sorely blamed, in Poland, for my willingness, in the absence of any better explanation, to admit such a possibility. In France, I think, I shall receive more indulgence. I do not wish to remake any portion of the history of Marie Thérèse, nor do I desire to cast doubt upon a reputation of which Louis XIV. himself was the avowed champion. But there are certain most compromising imprudences, which can hardly be described as mortal sins. Such things are forgiven, I believe, even in the case of downright saints. And I am inclined to believe that somewhat of this kind must have occurred, either at the Convent of the *Petites Carmélites*, or elsewhere. The point in itself is not of much importance, nor indeed is the episode with which it is connected, and on which I have dilated merely because it forms part and parcel of the story I am telling. It not only sets Marysienka before us in a new and picturesque light, but it exercised an influence, the importance of which neither she nor her husband foresaw, on the mutual relations of the two Courts concerned. I know not how it came about that M. Brisacier, having had the impudence to desire to be a duke, contrived to escape chastisement—but I do know how Sobieski was punished for failing in his kingly duty.

In the first place, Marysienka's personal policy never recovered from this misadventure. It was irremediably damaged and discredited by the disastrous result of the French sovereign's first attempt to gratify the longings of his Polish sister. For he had really believed—and the decision had cost him a severe effort—that he was making

¹ Despatches and confidential letters from the Bishop of Marseilles and the Marquis de Béthune, 15th September, 16th and 17th November, 1676 (Foreign Office).

Marysieńka's father a duke, and then, behold! this low fellow Brisacier had been thrown in his face.

Not very straightforwardly, we must admit, and with a fine forgetfulness of his own share of responsibility for the incident, he never failed to make this an excuse for refusing all further requests of the same nature.

Sobieski's policy, a far more serious and comprehensive one, was also to suffer. The flood of harsh and most unpleasing light shed on the personality of his lately crowned brother-monarch filled Louis XIV. with an impression of disenchantment and disgust which he was never to lose. The Polish hero was far too simple-minded, too careless of his own dignity and that of others—dealings with him were altogether too risky. This sentiment was always to betray itself in the future relations of France with her northern ally, and even in the French view of the treaty already contracted at Jaworów. Yet this cause was not the only one which swayed the future fate of the Alliance. There were others deeper yet—quite unaffected by Marysieńka, her father and her brother-in-law, and all her domestic worries and affairs—which were to intervene, and that in a far more decisive manner. These too I must describe, as briefly as may be.

V

At the end of the year 1677, M. d'Arquien was still a plain marquis; Marysieńka, who had desired to take the waters at Bourbon, had allowed herself, somewhat unwillingly, to be dissuaded by M. de Béthune; and yet the Treaty of Jaworów remained in force, and seemed likely to be carried out. Sobieski declared himself ready to act in Prussia as soon as the Swedish troops began to move thither, and the *starosty* of Spiz, which had been converted into a depôt for victuals, men, and remounts, was rendering signal service to the Hungarian insurgents. Marysieńka grumbled constantly, and sulked with the ambassadors, but this had nothing to do with her husband's State affairs.

In the course of the three following years her discontent grew deeper. Losing all hope of securing a fitting establishment for her father in France, and perceiving that his own laxity of conduct compromised his chances more completely every day, she took it into her head to send for him to Poland. But an unexpected obstacle arose. The moment the idea of his departure got wind, D'Arquien's creditors threatened to prevent his leaving France, by casting him into prison. This would seem the common fate of those French gentlemen for whose daughters Marie de Gonzague had contrived to provide on the banks of the Vistula. In 1662, Mlle. de Mailly's father was in the same sad condition, and had already spent three years stretched on damp straw in the Conciergerie, 'for imaginary debts,' so he declared, beseeching the great Condé's kind intervention, and recalling the fact of his having had the honour to command the King's naval forces at the siege of La Rochelle. Whereupon the prisoner's son interposed, and prayed the Prince to leave things as they were, seeing his father only sought his liberty, 'to ruin his house and provide for his bastard.' The Marquis d'Arquien, who was arrested in his coach in the open street, flattered himself he would obtain his liberty, and the necessary funds for his journey, by selling his office as Captain of Monsieur's Guard. This time, Mme. de Béthune objected, asserting that her unnatural father desired to strip her of the only inheritance she could ever expect from him. She reckoned her share at twenty thousand crowns, and deposited an energetic protest against the sale with M. de Pomponne. Forthwith there was a quarrel between the two sisters, and the Marquis de Béthune found his position as ambassador one of serious difficulty.

Towards the end of 1678 the French King decided to recall him. This made matters worse. The angry sisters had made it up meanwhile, and Marysieńka, considering herself affected by her elder sister's disgrace, behaved as if she had received a most intolerable insult, wept, clamoured, and ended by advising the ambassadress to pay no attention

whatsoever to her sovereign's orders. Then Louis grew angry. His new ambassadors at Warsaw, the Bishop of Beauvais and M. de Vitry, lost no opportunity of feeding his wrath, ascribing the disagreeable reception they themselves experienced to the influence of the Marquise. He repeated his commands; they were obeyed, and the culprit was sent to the country under a *lettre de cachet*. Marysieńska burst into a fury, and her father, who had lately joined her, cast oil upon the flames. The Bishop of Beauvais and M. de Vitry agreed in declaring the Queen had become the sworn enemy of France. She was Austrian, now and henceforth, in heart and soul, and was negotiating with Vienna to marry her eldest son to an Archduchess.

And the King? The King was the same as ever, faithful to his original sentiments, and anxious, as always, to fulfil his engagements. Only his goodwill was checked by far more serious difficulties, now that the Austrian and Brandenburg opposition was supported by the Queen. It was no new thing, in Poland, to see the Queen on one side and the King on the other. But the position was not the same, of course, as when the first used her influence over the second. In October 1678, Akakia, the French agent, who had fallen into temporary disgrace, but had now returned to favour and been appointed to Warsaw, thus described the situation:—

‘She, the Queen, plays the chief part in everything that is done, and is preparing to withstand France in the coming Diet. She obtains all favours for the persons who are most attached to the Emperor, so that they may be the more opposed to France, and she the more assured of their dependence. In fact, it may be said with truth that she is at the head of the Austrian party, which collects and rallies all the enemies of the King her husband, and she clears the road to the precipice over which they would fain cast him, without any fear of being carried down herself with him, so blinded is she by passion, and by her desire for vengeance on France and the French ambassador, to whom she imputes the small success of her too great pretensions.’

And a few months later—in February 1679—the Marquis de Béthune, who was still employed in supporting the Hungarian insurgents, but who now found the occupation a by no means easy one, bore witness that Marysienka's husband, far from approving his wife's conduct, had quarrelled with her, in his endeavour to oblige her to alter it. 'Never had he given proof of so much zeal and affection for France.'

Speaking generally, the 'Hungarian diversion' was destined to yield nothing but disappointment, and the proposed campaign against the Prussian 'vassal' seemed doomed, henceforth, to utter failure. But could the local opposition, even when strengthened by the Queen's adhesion, have sufficed to weaken French action and shackle the Polish eagle's flight? Certainly not. The check in Prussia began with the delay of the Swedes about moving their troops forward. Now the Swedes had their own reasons for not hurrying. As usual, they did not propose to do anything without French money, and that money was slower and slower in its coming. Wherefore? Because, as the chances of success in the enterprise increased, the interest of France in supporting it diminished, and finally disappeared in 1679, with the third Treaty of Nimeguen (February 5th) and the Treaty of St. Germain (June 29th), which made peace between Louis XIV., the Emperor, and the Elector. By the same causes, French sympathy with the Hungarian patriots was watered down to almost total indifference.

There can be no doubt that Louis XIV. was at this moment nursing the 'mental reservations' which were revealed to the world by the occupation of Strasburg in 1681. It was important for him to hold the Empire in check, but the Poles and Hungarians had suddenly become less indispensable for this particular purpose. The Turk was undertaking that duty. The great invasion which was to bring Kara Mustapha to the gates of Vienna was already on the horizon. This most useful 'diversion' would be still more complete if Poland kept out of it, and Leopold was left to struggle with Islam single-handed. But the French

King and his ministers thought this precaution more of a luxury than a necessity. They were willing enough to take it, provided it did not cost too dear. And the pecuniary advances made, and future liberalities promised to Poland, diminished in consequence.

To tell the whole truth, King Louis was swayed, in this matter, by a fairly justifiable error of judgment. To the very last he refused to believe in the possibility of any complete and definite defection on the part of Sobieski and his wife. And in this particular the unlucky Brisacier business certainly influenced him. It had shown him the King and Queen in a light which, so far as he was concerned, proved a false one. He looked on them as puppets, whom he would always be able to move according to his will; needy, greedy, credulous folk, whose heads a good-for-nothing monk had turned with exaggerated tales, a purse of money, and a handful of diamonds. Behind her, like a log, the D'Arquien Queen dragged her doubtful origin and her hateful family. She kept her father under her own eye, but even so she failed to protect herself and him from the freaks of his quarrelsome temper and love of low intrigue. One of her sisters, Anne, had also followed her to Poland, and found a good establishment there—having married the future Grand Chancellor of the kingdom, Wielopolski. But another sister, Françoise, who had been left in France, hated the convent where she had been shut up, 'complained and murmured strangely,' and ended, in 1680, by making her escape and taking refuge in the Palais Royal 'in a low house,' whence it had been absolutely necessary to remove her,—which had not been accomplished without recourse to violence and craft. Helcel's Collection (iii. pp. 56-71) contains an edifying correspondence between the Bishop of Beauvais and Marysienka, on this subject.

Louis XIV. saw all this. And he heard his former subject clamouring shrilly for the arrears of her pension, now raised to twenty thousand livres, and amply deserved, so she affirmed, by her care to 'do blindly everything which could

bring satisfaction to the King,' while her husband craved payment of a sum of a hundred thousand livres—half promised and fully earned, as he avouched (he did not believe a word of it), by the Peace of Zurawno, which he had signed 'against his interests and those of his country.' At the last moment, the King thought, he could always secure both husband and wife by giving them their price—the husband more especially, when it came to a question of forbidding him to ally himself with Austria. He was the cleverest of the two, and would understand that such a step must simply mean working against his own interests, and for his adversaries in the year 1664—Charles of Lorraine and Eleanora—whom the court of Vienna would never sacrifice to Sobieski's dynastic aspirations.

Sobieski did realise it. But the King's calculation failed. It was based on a misunderstanding of the man and of the whole race from which he sprang. Complex beings, these Polish nobles! their feet planted in a sea of mud, their heads reared haughtily, and they themselves capable of soaring to the very heights in some sudden ecstasy, which no man might foresee, of heroism and faith! Well did Sobieski know what he was to find before the walls of Vienna. An ungrateful ally, who would not even say 'I thank you' to his saviour—scorn of his own person—no hope of future support for his family. But he knew, too, that his duty, the call of his own blood, the lament of the warriors buried under the Ukraine mounds, the voice of God Himself, summoned him to Vienna. Soldier and Christian as he was, child of the Polish Marches, reddened by centuries of struggle with the Moslem invader, grandson of the valiant Zolkiewski, he made the only choice worthy of himself.

His duty, we have since been assured by historians (those eternal fault-finders), was to have prevented the partition of Poland by checking Muscovy and Brandenburg, at all costs, and leaving the Austrian to his fate. That is easily said nowadays. But in 1683, Peter the Great was eleven years old, Frederick the Great was not born into the world, and

Kara Mustapha, if he had triumphed at Vienna, would have led his army home through Warsaw. Sobieski's sons might possibly have governed the city for the Sublime Porte!

His honour, and his highest claim to glory in the eyes of posterity, are that he escaped this fate, and Marysieńska's greatest good fortune was that her influence failed to force him to it. Both for husband and for wife, Vienna was the culminating point, the material and moral apogee of a fortune that was soon to be clouded over. My readers will permit me to follow them, for a moment, athwart their short-lived and brilliant apotheosis.

CHAPTER X

THE CROWNING PERIOD

- i. Treaty, offensive and defensive, with Austria—M. de Vitry's effort to break up the Diet assembled for its ratification—The French envoy's failure.
- ii. The Siege of Vienna—Sobieski takes the field—His farewell—The Christian army—Germans and Poles—Sobieski in supreme command—Leopold—The Empire minus the Emperor—Defaulters—The Elector of Brandenburg—The Polish infantry—The East and the West—Kara Mustapha's plans—His confidence—The town reduced to extremity—Staremburg—The Tower of St. Stephen—The Kahlenberg—Sobieski's arrival.
- iii. The battle—Preparations—Father Mark says mass—A reconnaissance in force—The Polish Hussars—The charge—The Turks are routed—Sobieski in the enemy's camp—A letter to Marysieńka—A silver-gilt stirrup.
- iv. Correspondence between husband and wife—The D'Arquien Queen as Regent—Marysieńka's strategy—The old perpetual quarrel.
- v. Close of the Campaign—Mutual disappointments—Leopold's ingratitude—A meeting on horseback—He does not even doff his hat—Reverses—Two battles of Parkany—The return to Poland.

I

ON March 31st, 1683, the die was cast, and Sobieski signed a treaty of alliance, offensive and defensive, with Austria. Up to the very close of the preceding year, the French envoy in Warsaw had refused to admit the possibility of such a thing, and Louis XIV. had shared his ambassador's illusions. He asked so little, as it seemed to him, of Sobieski, whom he could not help regarding as his servant by right divine—nothing but permission for France to raise troops on Polish territory, for service in Hungary or Transylvania, together with some trifling assistance in war material and food supply. And on his side, he considered, he was making a most liberal offer: a yearly pension of twelve thousand crowns for the

sacrificing her former crony. She stopped three couriers, and got possession of his letters. He burnt the cipher, but this only made his correspondence look more suspicious. He sank at once. The hour of his exile had struck. He did not take it very deeply to heart, and departed for Versailles. Thus M. de Vitry was deprived of the only person on whom he could have depended, at the favourable time and fitting place, to draw the dagger of the *Liberum veto* in the cause of France.

II

On the 14th of July 1683, Vienna was besieged by a Turkish army which, though it had left numerous detachments and strong garrisons all along its road, and thrown out skirmishers even beyond the town of Linz, still numbered some hundred and eighty thousand men.

The memory, nowadays, seems like a dream! Yet the event is scarcely more than two hundred years behind us!

Till the very last moment (and this fact alone should suffice to justify Sobieski's action) no one, either in Poland or Germany, knew against what point the invader proposed to direct his forces. According to the best historians, the march on Vienna was only resolved on at a council of war held at Adrianople, in the month of June.

On the 12th of August, yielding to the more and more pressing requests of Leopold and the German princes, John Sobieski took up arms. It was a decisive moment, and that not for the Empire only. For three centuries past, in spite of the stubborn resistance of its neighbours, the Ottoman power had been growing and spreading abroad over the world, in three directions. In Europe, Moslem conquest had crept along the Danube, the Save, and the Adriatic coast, right into the heart of Christendom. On one side it had crossed the Carpathians, on the other it was close on Presburg and Vienna. From the banks of the Euphrates and the shores of the Indian Ocean, away to Tripoli and Gibraltar, from the cataracts of the Nile to the towns of

Upper Hungary—the tide had risen ceaselessly, and this time the Rhine itself was threatened.

The Queen of Poland accompanied her husband as far as the passes of Tarnów, where the day of the 21st August was spent in waiting for stragglers, and where General Caraffa made his appearance with letters from the Emperor, and from Charles of Lorraine. They besought His Majesty to hurry, to come alone if his troops could not follow him—his presence in itself 'was worth an army.' But Sobieski had his Poles ready in hand, some thirty thousand seasoned men who, under him, had learnt to face the Turkish and Tartar hordes, and, under him, believed themselves invincible. The Lithuanian contingent was behindhand, as it generally was. But he would do without it.

He embraced Marysieńka, wept, vowed he should die of the wound the separation caused his heart, much more certainly than by those the enemy might inflict on his body, and departed, taking with him his eldest son James, whom he called 'Fanfan,' or 'Fanfanik.' On the 4th of September he reached Stetteldorf, the spot agreed on as the general rendezvous of the Christian forces, and took over the supreme command. A clause in the treaty of March 31st had reserved this position for Leopold, in case of his joining the army, but this was a mere formality. The military efforts of the Hapsburg monarch were to be limited to two reviews, and Voltaire was one day to pen the assertion that 'the battlefield of Vienna had gathered together the whole Empire, except the Emperor himself.' The friend of Frederick the Great overlooked, perhaps designedly, yet another defaulter.

The Empire had a hero, in those tragic hours—Starhemberg, who commanded the besieged town, and who proved himself worthy of the part he was called to play. And all the Princes, Dukes, and Counts of threatened Germany were gathered round him. Lorraine, forgetful of past grudges; Saxe-Lawenburg, Anhalt, Holstein, Eisenach, Wurtemberg, the two Badens, the two Neuburgs—brothers of the Empress; Eugène of Savoy, the future adversary of

France, then colonel of a dragoon regiment lately raised by his brother Julius, who was killed on the 7th of July in a brush with the Turkish vanguard at Petronel; and the Electors too—Saxony, Bavaria, Hanover, Hesse-Cassel. All, I say, save one: the Elector of Brandenburg was waited for in vain. Sobieski appealed to him, recalled him to his duty as his vassal, and the Prussian ended by sending three thousand men—who lost themselves upon their way!

An impression prevailed at Berlin, even in those days, apparently, that Germany could do without Vienna.

Pope Innocent XI. had proffered money and his benediction, but he declined to send a sword. One had been bestowed on Sobieski's predecessor, Michael, who had never drawn it. Such a gift must perforce be accompanied by a rose for the Queen. This, which had been fitting enough in the case of the Archduchess Eleanora, was not to be conferred on Marysieńka, the daughter of a plain French gentleman. 'Truly,' wrote Sobieski early in August, with a heroic forecast of his approaching triumph, 'Rome never made a greater mistake!' Benedetto Odescalchi failed both in foresight and in gratitude, for Marysieńka had always felt the greatest veneration for him, and went so far as to desire he should be canonised, a matter to which she made reference in her will. But he was no friend, as we all know, to France.

The Imperial Army, numbering some four-and-forty thousand men, was a splendid array. All picked German troops, men who had fought on Rhenish battlefields, and coped with the soldiers of Condé and Turenne. So struck was Sobieski by their carriage, their equipment, and their discipline, that he wondered their leaders had thought they needed him and his Poles to help them to try conclusions with the Turk. 'These people,' he was heard to say, 'are like horses: they do not know their own strength.' And he grew disturbed about the figure his own men were likely to cut beside such comrades. Not his hussars and cuirassiers, indeed—they could face any amount of

comparison; but the infantry was really a pitiful sight. Shabby, ill-equipped fellows, whose clothes scarce covered them, bare-footed, many of them, and their muskets bound with cord to prevent their falling to pieces. Yet they had splendid qualities of endurance, devotion, and stoic courage. Hear the words of Dalerac, a contemporary chronicler: 'These soldiers, tattered as they are, show the most extraordinary resolution. They endure every sort of discomfort, nakedness, and hunger, with the most heroic constancy. They bear all the brunt of the war, and face all its dangers, to such a point that, during the most dangerous retreats, when the Tartars were close on the army's heels, I have seen the infantry acting as rear-guard in the open plains to cover the retreat of the Polish gendarmerie, which rode away without the slightest hesitation. I have seen these soldiers, starving with hunger and overwhelmed with fatigue, lying down on the ground to load their muskets, which they could hardly carry, but which they never ceased firing.'

They were the backbone, stiff and unbending, of the national strength, so thoughtlessly wasted in days of yore, destined to be yet further squandered ere the sun went down. But how was the King to reveal all this poverty to his German allies? He got out of the difficulty like a true *Szlachcic*. One particularly ragged battalion had better, so his officers suggested, be smuggled past at night. He gave orders to set it at the head of the whole Polish contingent, and when the tattered regiment marched by, 'Gentlemen,' he said, 'these men have sworn an oath to wear nothing but garments taken from the enemy. They have cast off the Turkish clothes they were wearing before the last treaty, but you will soon see them dressed in splendid Eastern garments.'

Marysienka's chief anxiety was for the effect produced by the Commander-in-Chief's own personal surroundings. 'Are the people about him sufficiently well provided?' she inquires. He reassures her. 'If the Imperialists only judge us by that matter, they will think us richer than

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Crœsus, and the most splendid persons of our century. My pages and lacqueys wear splendid liveries, my horses have magnificent trappings, our rooms—mine and Fanfanik's—are hung with cloth of gold. None of them have a strand of gold in their horse trappings, and I have seen neither pages nor lacqueys about any of the princes.'

Even within the limits of this European army, convoked to withstand the Moslem invader, East and West were standing face, to face, and taking stock of one another. And we may be sure that Charles of Lorraine and his comrades must have been struck, in their warlike simplicity, with the fact that there was a strong tincture of the Turk about the Pole.

But indeed Sobieski had no reason to complain of them. Princes and Electors vied with each other in requesting his orders, posted guards of honour before his tent, deferred to his slightest remark. 'Ah! if our people would only do the same,' cried the King.

Even early in September, and in spite of Starhemberg's valour, Kara Mustapha could have taken Vienna by assault. The defences of the town were all broken down. But assault meant pillage, following on carnage, and the Vizier's dream was to make the Christian city the capital of a principality over which he himself should reign. He waited on, so as to force a capitulation. Already some of the inhabitants were opening secret negotiations with the Turkish outposts. And further, Kara Mustapha did not believe in the likelihood of the arrival of Sobieski with a strong Polish army. Never, thought he, would those unruly country nobles (and well he knew them) consent to travel so far and fast to defend the hated *Niemiec* (Germans). It was not till the night of the 10th of September that his Tartars warned him of Sobieski's certain approach. He held a council. Most of the pashas were for raising the siege, and awaiting the Christian army in the open country, where the cavalry, of which two-thirds of the Turkish army was composed, might reap the advantage of its superior numbers.

If they stayed where they were, they would be caught between the town and the wooded or vine-covered hills which lay around it. But Kara Mustapha was obstinate. He was still wedded to his dream. What would they say at Constantinople, if he turned his back on a place already three-parts taken? And besides, the Tartars were probably mistaken. He would leave twenty-four thousand men in the trenches, and he would face the enemy with the rest. They would still be two to one.

When the next morning broke, the town was at the last extremity. All night long distress-signals had been sent up from the Tower of St. Stephen, the smoke and flame of their desperate appeal rising to heaven with the clamour of the church bells, and the prayers of the beleaguered citizens huddled on the flags below. At sunrise Starhemberg stood on the tower, scanning the horizon, watching for the succour in which his last hope lay. Suddenly, north-west of the town, on the heights of the Kahlenberg, lying towards Cracow, a huge red standard with a white cross shook out its folds and fluttered in the breeze. The heroic warrior dropped on his knees. The allied army was at hand, and Sobieski was its leader!

Neither Kara Mustapha nor the besieged folk whom he believed at his mercy had expected the newcomers from that quarter. That approach was held to be impassable, and therefore, in spite of numerous remonstrances, Sobieski had pitched upon it. As a matter of fact, the Germans were forced to leave their artillery behind them. The only guns that came across the ridge were those dragged over by the despised bare-footed Polish soldiers, sons of the tough, long-enduring, toil-hardened race that still peoples the basin of the Vistula.

When Sobieski reached the brow of the hill, his heart stood still for a moment, with a pang of disappointment and alarm. He had been assured the inner slope was smooth and gentle. Instead of this, he saw an abrupt and rugged declivity, 'precipices on the left, very high mountains on the

right,' and woods and vineyards. But he soon recovered confidence. He would change his plan of attack, and act *alla sicura* 'in the manner of Maurice of Nassau and the Spinolas.' A second glance at Kara Mustapha's camp, and the approaches to it, completely reassured him. He saw a huge town—some hundred thousand brilliant-coloured tents—stretched at his feet, close up to the besieged city. But it was an open town. Not a single redoubt had Kara Mustapha thrown up to protect it.

'He is a bungler,' said the King aloud; 'we have him now!' And he made his arrangements for the fight.

Kara Mustapha was a skilful leader enough. His march upon Vienna—a bold step, well conceived and carried out—proves it sufficiently. The army under his command was brave, well-trained, and sufficiently strong in numbers to justify his boldness. But Sobieski's lucky star, his superior genius, and the God of the Christians, were on his side.

III

On the 12th of September, at four o'clock in the morning, the King, surrounded by his staff of German princes, betook himself on foot to the ruins of a convent which the Turks had lately burned. There, in the open air, amongst the silent ruins, that made their dumb appeal to Heaven for vengeance, an altar had been raised. Father Mark d'Aviano, a Capuchin monk then celebrated, both in Italy and Germany, for piety and eloquence—something of a prophet, and something, too, of a necromancer—said mass. Sobieski served it, and the two set themselves to raise the courage of the Christian soldiers. The King would lift his arms and hold them outstretched in silent supplication. The monk would break off in the middle of the service, turn to those present, and thunder out the question—

'Have you faith in God?'

'Yes! yes!'

Back he went to the prayers, and then again he cried, 'Say "Jesus, Mary," with me three times over.

A great sob shook the prostrate crowd.

'Jesus! Mary! Jesus! Mary! Jesus! Mary!'

Thus may men's hearts be wrought up to the necessary pitch of valour and ferocity, fearless and merciless at once! Islam, even in those days, had already lost the secret of the magic formula which had been part of the Prophet's legacy.

The priest went on speaking in Latin, saying simple things which all could understand or guess at; but his inspired countenance and imperious gestures were in themselves sufficient explanation of his words. At the communion, chalice in hand, he beckoned to the two leaders, Sobieski and Lorraine, and every man, soldier and general alike, realised that they too, in their chiefs' persons, were sharing the Divine Food which was to endue them with superhuman strength. At last the end came.

Ite, missa est.

And the priest added, 'God is on your side! In His Name I promise you the victory.'

Then Sobieski mounted his horse, the army fell into battle array, and the descent began. On the left were the Imperialists, in the centre the German contingents, and on the right the Poles, under the immediate command of their own King. This arrangement of Sobieski's gave proof both of his tactical instinct and his bravery. The Polish contingent, which was to debouch from the Dornbach ravine, and move in a southerly direction, would threaten the enemy's line of retreat, and consequently attract its chief and heaviest resistance. But the King made a mistake in supposing that the whole day would be spent in reaching the ground on which the decisive contest was to be fought out on the morrow. This operation did, in fact, last till three o'clock in the afternoon. At the last moment Kara Mustapha made up his mind to post infantry on the slopes, and throw up some hasty defences. Slowly the Christians advanced, dislodging the Janissaries, who, with their usual tenacity,

retired gradually, step by step; and when the sun began to drop, the whole army was just about to halt for the night, on the positions already secured. But, at that moment, Sobieski's practised eye caught a quiver in the huge multitude ranged opposite him, under the great green standard. Kara Mustapha was, as the Christian leader had foreseen, manœuvring to concentrate the greater part of his strength on his own left, and the movement was being carried out slowly and waveringly. The Turkish soldiers knew now, beyond any possibility of doubt, that the victor of Chocim was in the field. They could see his dreaded ensign—a falcon's wing on the point of a long lance—and the half superstitious panic—that pale reaper of human courage—which had run through their ranks at Lemberg, was at work again. In a flash, Sobieski made up his mind. He must take advantage of the confusion just beginning to shew itself. His *aides-de-camp* flew in all directions; the attack was to begin at once.

But the Polish military tactics of that period involved a preliminary manœuvre, the utility of which it is difficult, nowadays, to comprehend. This was a sort of reconnaissance in force of the enemy's lines, and the German army watched, in open-mouthed astonishment, while the following extraordinary scene was enacted before its eyes. A squadron of Polish hussars—that of Prince Alexander, the King's younger son—left the main body, and spurred straight towards the Turkish camp. There were one hundred and fifty horsemen, all gentlemen of birth. Horsemen, did I say? Fighting-machines, rather! These picked troops were armed and equipped after a fashion quite contrary to that deemed appropriate for light cavalry. Each *towarzysz* (comrade) bore a whole arsenal about his person. Two swords—one short and curved, the other long and straight—various weapons hung at his saddle-bow, pistols in his holsters, and each man carried a lance twelve or fifteen feet long, made of hollow wood, so that it might break, at the first impact, without stopping or unseating its bearer. They

were clad from head to foot in steel or precious mail. A tiger-skin hung over each silver-scaled cuirass, and on their shoulders were fixed slips of wood or metal covered with feathers, giving their wearers the appearance of great birds of prey with outspread wings. These were an additional protection to the warriors' necks, and startled the horses of the enemy. Their own horses were extraordinary beasts, possessed of powers which to us, in these days, seem fabulous, for, heavily loaded as their riders were, they were light and agile beyond all belief, and shot through space, leaping the ditches and walls that barred their passage. Once they were started, nothing turned them back. On they flew like destroying angels, wonderful, fantastic, formidable. 'The finest cavalry in Europe,' says Dalerac, who cannot be accused of any special weakness for aristocrats.

Sobieski beckoned to the leader of the squadron, Zbierzchowski. He bore no lance. His long straight sword was in his hand, and he was rolling up his sleeve above the elbow of his brawny arm, baring it to receive the crimson dew. The King's forefinger pointed towards the left wing of the Ottoman army, growing and swelling in a rising tumult, where a little scarlet tent had just been pitched for the Grand Vizier. Away the squadron started, first at a canter, then at a quicker pace, right through the Turkish outposts, plunged like a huge cannon-ball into the second and far more serried line, disappeared for a moment, emerged beyond it close to the main body and the scarlet tent, bent to the right, tore at full gallop across the front of a great troop of Tartars, who never moved hand or foot, and back again towards the Christian camp. The reconnaissance was over. Zbierzchowski still rode at the head of his hussars, but a fourth of his followers had fallen.

Sobieski was accused, in later years, of having thrown away the lives of these men, to rid himself of a certain member of the squadron. What accusation has been spared the unlucky monarch? There may indeed have been a useless sacrifice of life, but it was certainly in consonance with

the ideas and practice then in vogue. It was probably something in the nature of a moral stratagem—a demonstration to the enemy, of the personality and capabilities of their attackers.

Immediately afterwards came the great charge, such as had never been made before, in all the history of Polish warfare. Seven thousand hussars and cuirassiers (*Pancerni*) formed into squares, flanked right and left by detachments of Polish or German cavalry—the Polish dragoons led by Count Maligny, the Queen's brother, the Imperial cuirassiers by Generals Rabatta and Dunewald—fell like an avalanche on the Turkish front, while the Christian left and centre, under Charles of Lorraine and Field-Marshal Waldeck, attacked the Moslem troops holding Heiligendstadt and Döbling, and turned Kara Mustapha's right, and the Polish infantry and artillery, supported by the Bavarian foot-soldiers, moved on the enemy's left, which was entrenched at Weinhaus. It was five o'clock. At six Sobieski was in the heart of the Turkish camp. He had stripped off his armour because of the heat, and, dressed in an ordinary silk doublet, had charged, like any lieutenant, at the head of his leading squadron. The Turks fled, leaving ten thousand corpses and the whole of their baggage (an immense booty) on the field. Private soldiers found themselves in possession of diamond-studded girdles, which, it was concluded, had been intended for the Viennese beauties. Kara Mustapha had lived in a little temporary palace, with gardens, fountains, kiosks, and aviaries peopled with rare birds. There was even an ostrich lying dead upon the ground, some fugitive having tarried to cut off its head. For a moment the King fancied he had secured the Standard of the Prophet, and forthwith sent it to the Pope, who had refused him a sword. But it turned out to be only the Grand Vizier's own green banner. The *nakiboul-echref* had escaped, and carried off the precious Standard with him.

The Ottoman power was never to recover from the blow. Kara Mustapha's infantry, the pick of the Janissaries, had

been killed almost to a man. The Padishah was never able to replace the void made in their ranks, and the few stragglers who found their way back to Constantinople only sowed ferment and demoralisation among their fellows.

The Christian armies were free to enter Hungary and Croatia. The iron bondage which had throttled those unhappy countries since the battle of Varna (1444) was broken at last, and their invaders' prestige was destroyed. Hungarians, Croats, Servians, Greeks, one after the other, were soon to shake their chains, and begin to clamour for their liberty. The common cause of civilisation and Christianity was saved; and Europe, emerging from an evil dream, delivered from a hideous nightmare, was soon to recover confidence in her own strength, and faith in her destiny.

All this was Sobieski's doing. Germans and Poles crowded about his charger, kissing away the foam that flecked its sides, sobbing for very joy, and shouting, each in his own tongue, 'Our King! the valiant King!'

Worn out with fatigue, after fourteen hours on horseback, Sobieski cast himself from his saddle, threw himself down on the hangings of a fallen Turkish tent, and called for a drum. He must write to Marysienka!

'Glory be to the Lord! He has not permitted the pagans to say to us, "Where is now your God?"'

And he goes on, a flood of tender sayings mingling with his picturesque story of the great event. Even as he writes, Kara Mustapha's warhorse, in glittering trappings, heavy with gold and gems, is led before him. The Vizier had mounted a lighter and fleeter steed for the purposes of flight. He unbuckles one of the silver-gilt stirrups, and sends it with his letter: 'You shall not say to me—like the Tartar women, when their husbands come back empty-handed from the fray—"you are no brave man!"'

The stirrup, which was hung up as an *ex voto* in the Cathedral at Cracow, has seen strange fortunes since those days. At one time it was in Prince Czartoryski's museum in Paris. That nobleman's heirs have restored it to the keeping of the God of Victories.

IV

Marysieńka! He had already spent part of the preceding night in writing her a long letter full of details, dated three o'clock in the morning of the 12th September. This was the twelfth since they had parted, so that he must have written almost every second day. The Queen's answers were less regular, and their tone was somewhat variable. She was tender too, and sometimes passionate, but always worrying, and generally affected. She was now reigning over Poland, for there was no one else to do the work. And she did it as best she could—which was rather worse than better—but always she insisted on knowing everything and interfering everywhere. One day she took upon herself to instruct her husband in strategy, and talked of putting herself 'at the head of the soldiers of her company.' He wrote in astonishment—

'Who are these happy soldiers? What company is that you speak of as yours?'

He knew of none in the army under his command. She vouchsafed no reply, but made up for it elsewhere.

'You pay no attention to my questions; I warrant you do not even read my letters!'

'I read them three times over: when I receive them, when I go to bed, and when I answer them.'

'You have not sent me the report of your last operations.'

'You must excuse me. I thought I recollected that you did not generally condescend to bestow any attention on such documents.'

'That was not the same thing—you were here, and when I have you I scarce have eyes or ears for anything else; and besides, they do not interest me when you take no part in them. But you do me wrong if you believe me so indifferent as to this war,—or pretend to believe it. Not only do I desire to know everything, even the smallest circumstance,

but I am ashamed to see it remarked that, after I have read your letters, I read all those I can lay my hands on, from any other person, although every one of them says the same thing. Every body else is tired of it, but I myself have no other pleasure. When Dupont came here, and when the Hetmans of Lithuania asked him how things had happened, and whether it had been a pitched battle, he showed them on paper, with a pen, the situation of the place where you had given battle, where the enemy and our own people had been, and what a dangerous place they had been obliged to get through while they fought. He can tell you that the Crown Hetman amused himself, at the end, by looking at other things—though this is his business, and he ought not to neglect any opportunity of learning it. Yet I am quite sure, such pains did I take to attend to what Dupont showed us, that I should make a better plan of it than the said Crown Hetman, except, perhaps, for the long words he has got by heart, to make men think him learned in his profession.'

This picture of the Crown Hetman and the Queen, one careless and the other attentive, during the explanations given by Dupont (a French engineer in the Polish service, whose real name was Le Masson), was intended to delight Sobieski. And it did succeed in this respect. But before long she was scolding and reproaching him again.

'You have taken a step which does not seem to me the wisest. . . . You do wrong not to listen to those who would give you good advice; you will be sorry, some day, for the neglect with which you treat those who pay court to you.'

'Who pays court to me? To whom am I to listen? Do you mean Tököli? You have just written me word he is a traitor!'

'I am greatly dissatisfied with you.'

He threw up his hands and bewailed himself. 'Here is my only reward and consolation!'

Yet he had others. First of all, that of seeing, as their quarrel dragged on, that the scene was shifting, their re-

spective positions altering, and their parts, too, occasionally interchanging.

'I am never out of anxiety, and never shall be, until I can embrace you once more, dear love of all my heart! Let it be soon, I beseech you, for I cannot live without you!'

Astrea now spoke lines which had once seemed specially reserved for *Celadon*. And she grew humble, affected resignation—she could not, of course, expect him to show her the same attention as in old days. She had only to reckon up her own years, and the number of her children.

He answered, with a touch of roughness, 'I have other reckonings to make! Even as I write, half the world lies before me in two camps, with a few leagues between them. And I have to think of them all!'

If computation were her fancy, he suggested another, of a more interesting nature—that of their mutual tenderness. 'In my case, though youth no longer feeds the flame, my heart and soul are as eager and as loving as ever!' Only had they not agreed it was her turn, now, to make the advances, and be kind and caressing? And he concludes—

'You must not lay your faults on others, and you must prove, not in thought, in writing, and in words, only, but by your actions, that there is no change in the love you bear your *Celadon*, who now ends, kissing all the exquisite charms of his *Marysieńka's* body.'

Like Poland, and all Europe as well, *Marysieńka* struck her colours to the victor of Vienna, though she did not fail, as time went on, to endeavour to avenge herself, and take up arms once more. The Turks did the same, alas! in the course of the campaign which was to carry the victorious army back to the Polish frontier, across the partly reconquered plains of Hungary. It wrought nothing but disappointment and disgust for Sobieski, and the intercourse between *Celadon* and *Astrea* suffered in consequence.

THE CROWNING PERIOD

V

On the morrow of the day which had seen the rout of the Moslem forces, the leader of the Christian army was welcomed as the saviour of Vienna. Yet, even then, a shadow seemed to lie upon the popular enthusiasm and delight. The townsfolk were very demonstrative, but their demonstrations did not appear altogether pleasing to the authorities, and Sobieski thought he perceived an attempt, in high places, to damp the over-noisy applause. All the Emperor vouchsafed, in answer to the complimentary letter he had hastened to send His Majesty, was a formal acknowledgment, couched in the driest official terms. There was no hint, even the most distant, of any desire for an interview. Leopold remained some leagues from his capital, and seemed inclined to await Sobieski's departure from it, before he himself returned. The head of the Empire was in a somewhat puzzling position. Incapable of any impulse of generous gratitude, he preferred to wrap himself in the traditional and unbending arrogance of his House, and to treat his saviour as an underling, a sort of Christian vizier, to whom he had intrusted the duty of fighting and vanquishing the Turk. Such a fiction could hardly have been put forward in the case of a Jagellon or a Vasa ; but Sobieski's antecedents gave it a tinge of probability.

Concealing his disappointment, gulping down his anger, and denying himself even a short interval of well-earned repose, the Polish monarch took his departure, returned to his camp, and applied himself to pushing forward his military operations. He was stopped by a courier. Leopold had changed his mind. He would be shamed for ever, in the eyes of Europe, if he allowed the man to whom he owed so much to depart after this fashion. A meeting there must be, if only to say farewell. But there were difficulties of etiquette. The Emperor could not set the King of Poland on his right hand, before the electors representing the Imperial States. Sobieski shrugged his shoulders. Beside

his lately acquired greatness, and in the light of such glory as he had won, this was but a pitiful trifle in his eyes. An interview on horseback, in presence of the two armies, Polish and German, was at last arranged. The thing in itself was barely decent, and Leopold, by his ungracious stiffness, made it worse. After a brief exchange of compliments, the King presented his 'Fanfanik.' The boy approached, bare-headed. The Emperor did not even condescend to raise his hand to his hat, and, passing like an automaton before the Polish troops, he disappeared, without a word, without a gesture!

A thrill of indignation ran through the ranks of hussars and cuirassiers, and sullen murmurs rose.

'He might have doffed his hat to us, at all events.'

There was fury in Poland too, and Marysieńska flew at her husband.

'It was very right that you should make no sign at the moment of your interview, but since then you should have spoken; and if you have not done it yet, you must do it now.'

She would not have failed to speak to the ungrateful and insolent sovereign as he deserved! Not being able to reach him, she complained to the Nuncio, who fully agreed with her.

'A folly, Madam! a folly! To your son, indeed! He might have done it to such as I—but to your son—there is no excuse! Most foolishly advised!'

But this did not mend matters. For formality's sake Sobieski made some remonstrance. He thought he would have fainted, so he wrote his wife, at the sight of the affront put on 'Fanfanik.' And all the more because the incident seemed to indicate the hopelessness of obtaining the hand of an Archduchess for the Prince Royal. Some clumsy excuse was the only apology vouchsafed, and with this he satisfied himself, for he had other and greater sources of annoyance. The moral humiliation, which he himself would have stoically endured, was bearing material fruit, which

threatened his army with disaster. As though by magic, the civil and military authorities of the country framed their behaviour on the Emperor's. No more provisions, no more help of any kind—even the most absolute neglect of the first principles of civility. The Poles were forbidden to re-enter the capital to fetch provisions, and warned that if they did so they would be fired upon. The liberator could not even obtain a barge on which to send his wounded to Presburg by the Danube. One of the Emperor's dragoons struck one of the King's pages, who was following close on his master's heels, right across the face with his musket. All punishment was refused. Sobieski was even forced to remark that the German princes and generals had lost, as by enchantment, all their recollection of the French language, which they had talked freely with him only a few weeks previously. 'Every man here has become a *guter Deutscher*,' he wrote to his wife. This did not prevent Leopold from informing his vizier that he should be glad to own a pair of the fine horses he was reported to possess. 'I shall return, apparently, on mule-back, or riding a camel,' wrote the hero again. The Germans pitilessly refused to supply him with forage, and his cavalry was rapidly melting away.

Was the poor King even to keep his share of the booty taken from Kara Mustapha? Marysienka was very uneasy on the subject.

'I cannot,' she writes, 'stomach the idea that that rascal Galecki' (comptroller of the royal kitchens, and colonel of dragoons) 'should have profited by all that was best amongst the Turkish spoil. He has robbed you! Who made the capture? Your dragoons. How comes he to appropriate what your regiment loses? You ought to profit by it, and if not you, does not my brother come before him? Leave it to me! I will make him understand, by all the justice under heaven, that everything taken by the regiment either belongs to you, or should be divided between the whole regiment!'

Celadon made what excuses he could. He thought him-

self fairly well provided : 'a diamond girdle, two diamond watches, four or five very gorgeous daggers, six quivers set with splendid rubies, sapphires and pearls, very rich curtains, quilts, carpets, and a thousand other trifles, and sable furs—the finest imaginable.' He would bring all these things back to her, and to stay her impatience he sent her something by every messenger—jewels, stuffs, 'a Chinese satin quilt embroidered with gold, quite new, and which had never been used,' the fellow to which he had taken himself for his camp bed, so that he might fancy he shared it with Marysieńka.

But nothing would please *Astrea*, and her ill-temper seemed shared by the whole of Poland. By one of the strange, but easily explained, phenomena which are apt to occur in social systems based on universal suffrage, the battle of Vienna, the victor of which was acclaimed by the whole of Europe, save one ungrateful Emperor—the mighty service rendered to the common cause—the glory shed upon his native country—produced but little effect, after the first outbreak of admiration, in that country itself, and what existed was soon quenched by jealousy and spite. Before long Marysieńka became the mere echo of the constantly increasing discontent and disapprobation about her. Envy reigns in all democracies. For no one person can attain the place of which he flatters himself to be worthy.

This time there was no lack of pretext for depression. The days following the splendid victory on the 12th of September were gloomy enough in every way. To begin with, the pursuit of the enemy was weak and tardy. On the German side it was asserted that Sobieski's desire to give his men time to collect the Ottoman spoils was responsible for this. Writing to his wife from the heights of the Kahlenberg, the King had mentioned the covetous eyes cast by his ragged soldiery on the lanes of Turkish tents. The conception of war nursed by these warriors was of the most primitive description. But the Germans, though not in the front rank—to be there they would have had to

charge with the cavalry—were not the hindmost in falling on the spoil. Every one had taken his share. And Sobieski, on his side, declared his German allies had forced him to carry under the walls of the capital. They may, indeed, have had another reason for keeping him there. The Turks, if pursued, must be followed into Hungary. Now on the 17th of September the King of Poland had received a message from the Hungarian insurgents offering him the Crown of St. Stephen. His refusal was in common knowledge at Vienna, but the Emperor may have found it hard to recover from the alarm into which the offer had thrown him.

Then came defeat. On the 7th of October, Sobieski, having rashly thrown himself, with a force of only five thousand cavalry, upon a body of Turkish troops concerning the strength of which he was insufficiently informed, received a decided check. For an instant he was left quite alone, and narrowly escaped captivity. In the Imperial army he was reported dead. The strength of his charger and the devotion of one German trooper alone saved him. But he was caught in a stream of fugitives, who, whether intentionally or not, jostled and crushed him, till his body was black and blue. He was forced to fly with them, and almost suffocated on the way. Matczynski, the most devoted of his aides-de-camp, had to gallop beside him, supporting his head. Charles of Lorraine, after some delay, protected the retreat. The main body of the Polish Army never moved; the infantry clamoured for orders to march, but these were refused. 'You are not worthy of such a king!' shouted the Germans.

This was the first battle of Parkany.

Terror-stricken faces gathered round the king, who had been lifted from his horse, and lay half-conscious, speechless, and motionless, on a heap of straw. This was the end, they whispered, fortune was turning her back on him.

With a bound he sprang to his feet.

Fortune! I will trample her like a common drab! To-

morrow you shall have a victory more brilliant than Vienna!

He almost kept his word. That second fight at Parkany saw all the solid remnant of Kara Mustapha's army sink into the waves of the Danube. The road to Gran lay open before the victors, and the cross glistened once more above the Palace of the ancient bishopric, founded by the father of St. Stephen, from which it had been torn full 140 years before.

But this was the last of Sobieski's successes. Winter was closing in, and even before the bitter cold cut short all military operations, Poland had begun to wonder why her King tarried to take possession of the Hungarian towns. Was he not going to conquer a kingdom for his son?

'You are making trouble for yourself here,' grumbled Marysienka; and he answered passionately—

'I am making trouble for myself, you say, by risking my life and fortune for my own people! Did they not desire this league with Austria? Have I done anything but obey their behest? I have led an army beyond their frontiers, without asking them for a copper coin! I have gorged the nation with glory and with spoil! What more can they desire? Men have lost their lives! Are they not born into the world to die? I am to spare the army, forsooth! What is the use of the army except for making war? They complain that I am slow to return! Yet there is nothing in the world they dread so much, I know, as to see me back at the head of my army. But I do not return! Firstly, because in my own interest and in theirs, I must stay here; if we did not fight the enemy where I am, we should have to fight him at home. Secondly, I am bound by a solemn oath. Thirdly, the Christian armies have appointed me their Generalissimo. They do not care a whit for my Polish soldiers; they would be content to have me alone to lead them. I shall not bring back the army! Another man will do that in my stead, and the people will have their desire, and will do as they choose. For soon, be sure, I will give

myself peace; I will have done with the league, and the command, and every earthly matter . . . They dare to threaten *me*, who spend my nights without sleep, and my days without food! I am worn out with anxiety; I work, and toil, and ruin my health, for the sake of my country; I—' Here comes a personal touch, and the pen is held by *Celadon*, not by the King—'I half kill myself, poor wretch that I am, to decipher your letters myself, always thinking I shall find something kind, pleasant, consoling. Nothing! Everything I do is wrong; everything I do always will be wrong, for ever!'

It was not the outraged warrior only whose complaint rang in these despairing utterances. The misused *Celadon* was suffering too. He had counted on a meeting with *Astrea* at the feast of St. Lucy, 'when the nights are longest.' But *Astrea's* answer to this proposal had been far from gracious. At first he made as though he would submit with resignation.

'From your letters I gather that the idea displeases you, and that in any matter of this sort you must do violence to your own feeling. I would rather, therefore, sacrifice my own greatest pleasure, and so save you the smallest pain. I give it up, then, and have vowed to myself so to do. It shall suffice me to kiss in fancy, as I do now, all the beauties of a body I adore.'

But very soon despair had the upper hand again.

Astrea was in the wrong, certainly, though the country was in the right, unconsciously it may be, when it fancied Sobieski was not making the best possible use of his victories. He declared his fellow-countrymen dreaded his return, leading his triumphant Hussars and Cuirassiers. This was the very reason why he should have taken that step. But Sobieski was not the man to realise this fact. Once the day of battle was over, his energy, resolution, and firmness all died down, and only flashed up fitfully here and there. The hero disappeared, and his place was taken by the voluptuous sybarite, indolent and weak, in love with the

pleasures of this life and the joys of conjugal existence. He was utterly incapable of checking his country on the giddy slope which was to carry it down to the abyss. He put his army into winter quarters, returned to Warsaw, cast himself on his laurel-decked couch, and let himself glide with the rest.

CHAPTER XI

DECAY

- I. Rapid downfall—Mistaken policy—The Polish nobility unmanageable—Pasek and his otter—An appeal to the foreigner—The Austrian Alliance—Treachery and perfidy—French diplomacy in Poland—Disappointment—The disastrous campaign of 1691—Sobieski discouraged—Willanów—A fallen hero—His companions—Father Vota and Betsal the Jew—Marysieńska's policy—She trades and grows rich—The King's last moments—His death.
- II. Quarrels over the corpse—Fresh electoral intrigues—François de Conti—The Abbé de Polignac—Marysieńska thinks of a third husband—She opposes her son and France—A double election—Augustus of Saxony triumphs—The retreat to Dantzic—Exile inevitable—On the road to Rome.
- III. Roman life in the seventeenth century—Devotion and worldly amusements—The Accademia degli Arcadi—Marysieńska and Queen Christina—The Odescalchi Palace—Suppers and gambling parties—Cardinal Barberini's *sabattini*—The Princes Constantine and Alexander—The Cardinal d'Arquien—Rivals in debauch—*Tolla the Courtesan*—Political anxieties—Prince James in Prison—Maternal emotion—More disappointments and distresses—Marysieńska's debts—Her final downfall—Her return to France.
- IV. Sobieski's descendants—The continuation of Marysieńska's romance—She lands at Marseilles—The Château des Bordes—She reaches Blois—Her last years—St. Simon's *Chronicle* and the real truth—Her death—Her Will.

I

THE downward path was swift. The succeeding years witnessed a series of glorious but fruitless campaigns. The Turks were vanquished, but the moment they were beaten the King hurried home, and back they came again. To pursue the advantages he gained, he should have had a regular army, and that was non-existent, for lack of funds to support it. The Diets, one after the other, either refused

the money, or, if they seemed likely to grant it, were promptly broken up through the influence of neighbouring nations. Sobieski had saved Vienna for Austria. To recover Kamieniec for Poland, he treated with Muscovy, and gave up Kiew and Smolensk. It was a pitiful bargain. The Muscovites, who had promised to help him in return, never even put on an appearance. They were far too busy bringing the ceded provinces into order.

The Polish nobility continued unmanageable. Would they have been absolutely refractory under a government worthy of the name, even if somewhat tinctured with despotism? I do not think so. And a story recounted by Pasek, the delightful chronicler of that period, would seem proof to the contrary. Saturated, as the Poles were, with Roman Republicanism (for they sought all their ideas and their models of parliamentary eloquence in that quarter), they were too near the borders of the East to have escaped Oriental influences in all their popular instincts, habits, and ideas. It was no easy matter to turn this to account. The reign of Augustus the Strong was, as I have already said, to prove it later. But it need not have been utterly impossible. Pasek, who had retired into the country after twenty years' service under Czarniecki, and devoted himself to country pleasures, found his chief delight in a menagerie, containing, amongst other denizens, an otter, which he had tamed and trained in a wonderful fashion. The creature was taken out fishing during Lent, plunged into the water at the word of command, and brought back the elements of an orthodox Catholic repast to her master's feet. At last her reputation spread so far, that King John asked to see the prodigy, and then expressed a desire to possess her. Pasek, though somewhat against the grain, agreed to part with his pupil, but refused, in his pride, to accept anything in exchange. Two days after her arrival at the Castle of Warsaw, the captive, fretting for her lost liberty, escaped, and wandered through the streets. A passing soldier killed her with a shot from his halbert, and sold the skin to a Jew. The two culprits

were arrested, and the soldier was condemned to death. He was just about to be shot when, at his Confessor's intercession, the King remitted the punishment to that of a public flogging. There were fifteen hundred men in the regiment; each man was to deliver fifteen blows, twenty-two thousand five hundred in all. This was the military discipline of the period, and of another far nearer our own—let my readers turn to the pages of *Candide*. When the three thousandth stroke was reached, the miserable man fell to the ground. Contrary to the regulations, the punishment continued, and he died. As the sovereign was the offended party, the regulations were a dead letter, and as the culprit was a mere peasant, Pasek finds no fault with the result.

If Sobieski had modified Pasek's notions as to the relative value of men's skins, he might have got out of his difficulty successfully enough. One of his predecessors, Batory, was in a fair way to do so, and had gone so far as to behead a prominent nobleman, when a premature death snatched him away before his task was done.

But no such idea occurred to Sobieski. He never thought of seeking the support he needed in the elements which nature and history had placed within his grasp. No memories of the founder of Polish greatness, that *Casimir the Great* who was also known as *the King of the Peasants*, ever rose before his mind. The fate which always waits on democracies, those merciless levellers and exhausters of all superior qualities, drove him to persist in his endeavour to supply what was lacking from a foreign source. Up to the year 1683, he had been the ally and pensioner, and, consequently, the vassal of France. After that period he became quite as devoted a tributary of Austria, and all his plans of internal policy hung on this sheet-anchor.

But the anchor kept dragging hopelessly. All through 1684, not a man nor a stiver could he extract from his ally, to help him to recover Kamieniec. In 1685, the Emperor, whose mind had been set at rest as regards France by the truce at Ratisbon, broke his pledged word to marry the

Arch-Duchess Marie Antoinette, to the Polish Prince James, and forthwith betrothed her to the Elector of Bavaria. In 1688, *Fanfanik* was reduced to soliciting the hand of a Princess Radziwill, the widow of a Margrave of Brandenburg. She would bring him, at all events, a great position in Lithuania, valuable connections and influence, and a well-nigh royal fortune. It was a fair makeshift, after all, for the heir of a dubious and fragile sovereignty. But it was snatched from his grasp. By whose action? Austria again! The Princess, though officially betrothed to young Sobieski, secretly accepted the attentions of Charles Philip of Neuburg, brother to the Empress, and a private marriage, performed in the house of Count Sternberg, the Imperial Ambassador at Berlin, crowned her treachery.

These disappointments, repeated insults, and many deceptions, produced a change in the King's mind, and even in Marysieńka's temper. The Liberator of Vienna has been accused of over-scrupulousness with regard to the agreement signed in 1683. This is an absurdity. He was too good an Italian student not to have read his Machiavelli. He could talk Latin too, and in 1676, when discussing the conditions of the projected *coup de main* in Prussia, with the Swedish Envoy, he had dropped the following aphorism: '*Quod eventus non causæ bellorum quæruntur.*' The *szlachcice* of that period was not, as a rule, much troubled with scruples. After 1688, at all events, France might, if her King had chosen, have recovered all her lost ground at Warsaw. He was willing enough, but shrank from the necessary means. As a matter of fact, the rupture of diplomatic relations between the two countries, resulting from the Austrian Treaty of 1683 only lasted a year. M. de Vitry, who had been insulted in the streets of the capital, left his post somewhat suddenly, without even taking leave of the Queen. But, in the month of July in the following year, the green shades of Jaworow sheltered various friendly colloquies between Marysieńka and the accredited representative of the most brilliant days of the French Alliance, the Marquis

de Béthune himself. What was the subject of discussion? Marysienka's brother-in-law was full of great plans,—a separate peace between Poland and Turkey, which was to leave ungrateful Austria to cope alone with the common enemy, an offensive movement by the conqueror of Vienna against other and more dangerous enemies of his country—the Prussian and the Muscovite—Prussia must be driven out of the Polish provinces, and the Muscovite cast out of Europe. M. de Béthune was rehearsing the part to be played sixty-four years later by the Comte de Broglie.

But Marysienka turned an inattentive ear, and Sobieski himself remained indifferent. First of all they must marry their son, and make sure of the future of their house. And if they ventured to insinuate, ever so timidly, that a wife might be found for him in France instead of in Austria, the French envoy, in his turn, grew absent-minded.

But why then had he found his way to Poland, and his collaborators with him? For before long there was a legion of them. Louis XIV.'s official grudge was one of long duration. But this did not prevent M. de Béthune from coming to breathe the air of Poland, as the Queen's kinsman, nor M. de Gravel, French minister at Berlin, as her neighbour, nor M. de Teil, as representing James II. of England. In 1689 their presence had alarmed the Viennese court to such an extent that the Emperor made an effort, offered Princess Hedwige of Neuburg, sister to the Empress, to Prince James, and a body of five thousand men to assist in reconquering the Danubian provinces. Then France thought it time to make a bid. To what extent? I almost blush to write it. Louis XIV. offered ten thousand pistoles for the King and two thousand for the Queen; M. de Béthune himself being of opinion that it was not safe to 'risk a Princess of the Blood.' Sobieski and Marysienka did not ask so much; they let it be clearly understood that they would be content with a daughter-in-law who was only more or less distantly related to the royal house. No answer was vouchsafed them.

In 1691 they made up their minds to accept the Neuburg Princess, and to dismiss their brother-in-law, whose operations on the Hungarian frontier could not be reconciled with this family connection. The Marquis created a scandal, and challenged the Count von Thun, the Emperor's new ambassador at Warsaw. But this did not serve French interests, either on the Vistula or near the Carpathians.

The newly restored Austrian Alliance did not, we must admit, bring much profit either to Poland or its rulers. The Moldavian campaign of 1691, which opened triumphantly, closed in disaster. The five thousand Austrian troops never arrived, and while Louis of Baden was winning his victory over that great Turkish warrior, the Vizier Mustapha Kuprioli, at Salankemen (29th August), the Polish army was almost starving to death. Sobieski had reckoned on supplies to be collected in Transylvania. These were stopped by orders from Vienna, and the troops he led home were an array of tattered skeletons.

This was the end. The Polish hero's nature was not tempered to withstand such reverses. Naturally indolent and weak, he soon fell into a condition of utter discouragement, sceptical carelessness, and brutal cynicism. He shut himself up at Willanów, a country-house near Warsaw, which he built, and which its present proprietor, Count Braniński, has been forced to reconstruct. After two hundred years, the house was falling down. Splendid as it was in appearance, it had been hastily raised on the sandy ground, almost without foundations. It was a soldier's dwelling, not a prince's palace. Sobieski had merely pitched his tent. Thither he withdrew himself to die, and, properly speaking, Poland was left without a king. Nothing remained but the *szlachcie*, averse to all exertion save the sport of hunting; a great eater, greedy of gain, a thorough materialist, in spite of his religious practices. As early as 1671 he was heard to say, 'Nothing in this poor world is really ours, except what we can eat with enjoyment.' In 1682 he betook himself to the forest, to escape the Vice-Chancellor of Lithuania, who had

requested an audience on most pressing business, hid himself behind the bushes, and dismissed the unwelcome visitor at last, shouting, 'To-day I am giving audience to my hounds!'¹ At Willanów his usual companions were Vota, a Jesuit priest, who slept on the hard floor at the foot of the King's couch, to keep his eye on his penitent, and Betsal, a Jew, who speculated in crown lands, and rarely left his ante-chamber. The sovereignty was nothing but a corpse. The worms were devouring it already.

And Marysienka! She was given a free hand to look after State affairs, and carry out her own policy. She did it, according to her lights. In 1691 a happy thought inspired her. She emptied the granaries of the royal property of Sambor to replace the Transylvanian supplies that had failed her husband. But this was a brilliant inspiration from those upper regions where Sobieski's genius still hovered. Left to her natural instincts, she went back to her natural occupations. She quarrelled with her eldest daughter and her daughter-in-law; she married her daughter Theresa to the Elector of Bavaria, whose Austrian Archduchess had left him a widower, and cheated about the dowry; she drove Princess Radziwill, the King's favourite sister, from Court, by dint of odious persecution. She gossiped with Mme. Feudherbe and Mme. le Lettreux, another tittle-tattle of the same class. By their means she knew every tale, put her finger into every intrigue, and industriously increased the number of her own enemies. As early as 1687, her secretary, Zaluski, author of the well-known memoirs, and a man of real worth, had left her in disgust. She grew rich, too, made money out of everything, even out of the ruins of the Polish monarch's prestige. The closing volumes of the correspondence exchanged between Warsaw and Versailles, up to the date of Sobieski's death, bear expressive testimony to the nature of the diplomacy whereof Marysienka was capable. They might easily be mistaken for a tradesman's account-books. France was passing, at that moment, through

¹ These details are taken from his letters to Marysienka.

an agricultural crisis. The D'Arquien Queen, negotiating with the Comte de Pontchartrain, the French minister, with Dantzic merchants, and Amsterdam, Dunkirk, and Norman shipowners, undertook to meet the difficulty, sent the Polish harvests to French ports, and reaped considerable profits.

She also busied herself actively about her husband's will. Early in 1695 the King's health began to give cause for anxiety. By the end of 1696 he could not endure his bed, suffering agonies from stone, choking in fits of asthma. He spent his nights in an arm-chair. Żaluski, wheedled back into the Queen's service, and gained over by his appointment to the bishopric of Płock, was deputed to persuade the dying man to write down his last wishes. At his first word the fallen hero broke in angrily:

'Men call you a wise man, and you talk to me of a will! What is the use? If fire burns up the earth after I die, or if the ox eats up the grass (he was quoting a Little-Russian proverb), what matters it to me? There is no man good on earth, no, not one!'

He died at Willanów, on the anniversary of his own election, June 17th, 1696.

II

The rest is not very pleasant to tell, and I will say no more than is strictly necessary. I must protect my readers, too, from the wearisome spectacle of a third interregnum. The nature of the scene was little changed—the same passionate competition, the same shabby manœuvres, the same disgraceful bargains. The whole thing, as we see it now, looks shady and shameful. The confusion was worse confounded, because no one knew exactly what he wanted, and the widowed Queen less than any other person. Austria, though half-heartedly, supported Prince James. France went back to the old game, the endless song of a French candidature, that was to checkmate the Austrian,

with as little expenditure as might be. Condé was dead, and the Poles were offered their choice between his son Henry, his grandson Louis, and his nephew François de Conti. But the Abbé de Polignac, who had been ordered to play the rubber, had no stakes to put on the table; the widowed Queen, who had quarrelled mortally with her son, was expected to supply that deficiency.

The dispute began over the corpse. Marysienka received, with her eldest son's expressions of condolence, his formal warning that she would not be allowed to enter the castle of Warsaw. Little she cared! she held the King's body. She carried it with her to the city, cried 'Make way for the King!' before the castle gates, and this time the angry populace supported her. Such arguments invariably sway the mob. The gates were opened, and James, thoroughly frightened, fell at his mother's feet. 'Never had he spoken to her so tenderly.' But she was cold, tight-lipped, dry-eyed, bent on her own idea—that of ruling still, in her own fashion, under the shadow of the corpse. But the mob outside the castle had its idea too: the dead man had been carried home, and now his people must see him on his funeral-couch. The corpse had not been dressed. An ermine-lined robe and sceptre were found in the castle wardrobe, but no crown. Where was the crown? The Queen had it. Would she give it? No. 'Prince James would take possession of it.' Matczynski, the dead King's faithful comrade, snatched a steel helmet from the wall, and thus the people of Warsaw took their last glimpse of the warrior of Vienna.

While they defiled before Sobieski's bier, Prince James slipped out of the town. News was soon brought that he was galloping on his way to the castle of Zolkiew, where the late King was supposed to have amassed an enormous treasure. A scornful smile curled Marysienka's lip. Her precautions had been taken more skilfully than that! A few days afterwards, James returned, crestfallen, and offered her five millions as her share of the treasure, which, he had

discovered, she had placed in safe keeping. She accepted, but her wrath was not appeased.

She negotiated with Polignac, at one time, to gain him over to the cause of one of her younger sons, Alexander or Constantine, and then, again, to an arrangement of a more personal nature. She had serious thoughts of marrying the Hetman Jablonowski, a warrior who might perchance succeed the dead soldier. She was fifty-seven years old, and he was over sixty. It was perfect madness! Alexander and Constantine, besides, voluntarily gave way to their elder brother, and even left the country, so as to do him no injury. They were handsome youths, bearing some physical resemblance to their father, and possessed, for that reason, of a certain popularity. James, who was puny and awkward, was far less generally attractive.

Suddenly, like a whirlwind, Marysieńka changed her mind, and turned her back on the Abbé. Since he would not be on her side, she would be against him, and would support Prince James!

Within a few weeks she had faced about again, and had set her affections on the Elector of Bavaria, a fact which did not prevent her remaining at open war with the French envoy. Her old spites festered like re-opened wounds. She set every possible engine to work against the *Francus*—foreign influence, a threatened confederation, and even bribery—but her special endeavour was to ruin Polignac's credit in his own country and elsewhere. The ambassador had given his adhesion to Conti's candidature, which, indeed, appeared the most acceptable to the Poles, and having no money to support it, he had run boldly into debt, on the chance of its probable success. Quite late in the day he received some financial assistance—a sum of two hundred thousand crowns, resulting from the sale, authorised by the prince, of certain private property. But it came too late to check him on the dangerous but convenient road into which poverty had forced him. He went on borrowing, and the Marquise de Béthune, primed by Marysieńka, was able

to inform the master of Versailles that his servant owed *six millions*! Towards the end of 1696, Louis XIV. took alarm, and charged the Abbé de Chateauneuf to clear off the terrible spendthrift's debts, and take his place.

The command had changed hands in the very face of the foe, and defeat had thus become inevitable. My readers know the rest—the double election of François de Conti and Augustus of Saxony, and the final triumph of Augustus, supported by the three future sharers of the spoil, Brandenburg, Austria, and Russia. Thus began the work which the year 1772 was to see accomplished.

Marysieńka struggled to the very end, though it would be hard to say for whom, or against whom, she fought. Twice the popular clamour drove her out of Warsaw, twice she came back, in her obstinate determination to retain some share of influence and authority. But it was a vain attempt. The very children pointed at her in the streets, and shouted 'Look at the old schemer!' Every one turned against her. She drove one bishop into a fury by keeping her face covered, while she spoke to him, with the mask she wore, according to the fashion of the times, to protect her complexion from the chilly air. Their meeting took place on the road to the convent of the Camaldolesi—a place full of memories to her. The instincts of the born coquette stirred within her yet!

In 1697 she departed to Dantzic, where she hoped to find a fresh sphere of action, the Prince de Conti having just arrived there with a small squadron. She was met by a deliberate conspiracy, on the part of his friends and adversaries alike, to keep her at a distance. 'She ruined everything.'

When the end came at last, and Conti beat a retreat, leaving Augustus in possession of the field, the conviction that Poland was no place for her was forced upon her mind. The very ground was too hot for her to stand on. The most indulgent and moderate persons fled her company; the rest threatened her with insults of a far more cruel

kind. She was saddled with every sin, even with those she had not the wit to commit. But whither was she to go? Her son James, who had retired into Sillesia, disliked her heartily, and showed it. To the two younger princes, a youth of nineteen and a boy of thirteen years old, who had been making a stay in France, she had lately written as follows :—

‘At last, after three months of silence, I have received a letter from you. This is very far from being what you owe me—but God afflicts me in all my tenderest parts. Your journey to France is a very unfortunate affair, seeing it has only done you harm, and instead of serving you, has damaged your reputation. You gave me hopes of seeing you perfect, and now, alas! how do you come back? You have well-nigh forgotten your God, you have given yourselves up to a wild and scandalous life, you spend more time in the intimate company of play-actors, singers, and gamblers, than in that of honest folk.’

Her sons could be no protection to her. Her daughter, the Electress, did not seem inclined to welcome her in friendly fashion. At Munich, even as at Vienna, the last fluctuations of her policy had not been forgiven her. She began to call on Providence oftener, and, it may be, more sincerely, than in former days. And Providence, no doubt, impelled her to go to Rome. The successor of the Odescalchi Pope, a Pignatelli, who reigned under the title of Innocent XII., was an old acquaintance of hers; he had been Nuncio in Poland, and had performed the ceremony of her second marriage. He surely would not refuse a refuge to the widow of the saviour of Vienna.

Her father, besides, had preceded her to the Eternal City, and had there sheltered his private disappointments under a cardinal’s hat. A strange close, this, to the career of such a miscreant! He never said mass—that my readers will easily imagine—and in spite of his ninety years, still clung to his loose habits, his mistresses, his law-suits, and his debts.

This did not prevent him from requesting his grandson James, at a moment when fortune seemed to smile on his chances of the Polish throne, to appoint him to the bishopric of Warmia!

Innocent XII. behaved in a thoroughly handsome manner. A decree of the Congregation *dei ceremoniali* ordered the apostolic legates and the governors of the papal towns to spare no expense in lodging and entertaining the august traveller. At Bologna, Cardinal Buoncompagni came to meet her, as Legate *a latere*; at Faenza she found Cardinal d'Arquien, and a magnificent reception prepared in the palace of Count Naldi. So lavishly was she entertained, that she was weary of Roman pomp before she reached Rome itself, and declared her intention of entering the city privately. She arrived very early in the morning of the 1st of April 1699, halted at a house in the suburbs, and spent the day there, with all the front windows tightly shuttered. When night fell, a closed carriage bore her to the Odescalchi Palace, where Christina of Sweden had once dwelt, and which was to be her home for the next fifteen years.

III

What was the nature of this new life? What was all Roman life like, at the end of the seventeenth century? M. Rodocanachi has lately given us a very detailed picture of it, and the Queen of Poland is one of the chief figures in his story. The very title of his book, *Tolla the Courtesan*, is expressive. This *Tolla* was closely connected with Marysieńska's new existence.

And here a personal memory rises up before me—a vision, remote, alas! already, of a clear spring morning in an Italian town. An ancient palace has resounded all night long with laughter and merry-making, and now, at dawn, the guests, male and female, clad in dancing attire, and many of them in carnival disguises, are issuing forth, to receive the Holy Ashes in the neighbouring church. None of us.

had a thought of profanity or licence. We did not dream of any evil—far from it! Even in this fashion, as M. Rodocanachi shows us, did men live their lives in the Rome of Innocent XII. It was the City of Indulgences *par excellence*—that city which Christina of Sweden had entered, some years before, on horseback, in her riding-habit. Marysieńka knew what she was doing when she sought a refuge within its walls.

No doubt, like the tired bird, she was resting her wings; she plunged eagerly, and even over-fervently, into the devotional practices of the place. She had always had religious leanings, since the days when she had given away scapulars to her friends. The ceremonies connected with Innocent XIII.'s jubilee were just beginning. She was present at all the *funzioni* in the Basilica of St. Peter, and, with her son Alexander, she set an example of the greatest piety during Holy Week. On all the following days, she drove about seeking for churches where the Blessed Sacrament was exposed. If she met a priest bearing the Host through the streets, she straightway stopped her carriage, left it, and knelt down in the mud and dust. The Convent of St. Egidia had a special attraction for her. At one moment there was a report that she was about to retire there permanently, and she may indeed have thought of it—one morning when her head ached! In 1700, when Clement XI. succeeded Innocent XII., she induced him to receive the Benedictine Nuns of the Perpetual Adoration, whom she had patronised in Poland, into the Eternal City, and built them a convent on the *Piazza della Trinita de' Monti*. She obtained the body of St. Justina from Cardinal Carpegna, Vicar of Rome, and presented it to the Capuchins at Monceau. Every year she caused a mass to be said in the church of St. Stanislaus *dei Polacchi*, for the soldiers who had fallen before the walls of Vienna, and every year she went a pilgrimage on foot, and distributed liberal alms about her path. In 1707 she was at Naples *incognita*, under the name of the Duchess of Jaroslavl, to witness the miracle of St. Januarius.

My readers will conceive that her piety was mingled with ostentation. She could not say her prayers like any plain mortal, without disturbing a great many other folk, and making a fine show of piety. At great ceremonies she insisted on having a special gallery, magnificently decorated. If she came to hear a sermon and arrived late, the preacher must begin his discourse over again.

In another department, she took great pride in following the footsteps of her illustrious forerunner, the foundress of the *Accademia degli Arcadi*.

On the 5th of October 1699 the Academicians proceeded in a body to the Odescalchi Palace, there to celebrate the anniversary of the foundation of their body. There was a formal sitting with a musical performance, readings of poetry, and speeches, followed by *un magnifico rinfresco*, and Marie d'Arquien herself was installed a member, under the name of *Amirisca Telea*.

But the Romans, a subtle and bantering race, were not deceived. The new-comer had little in common with her predecessor. She was quite as stormy-minded, but otherwise essentially different, and the following tiercet was bandied from lip to lip:—

‘Naqui da un Gallo semplice gallina,
Vissi tra li Polastri, e poi regina,
Venni a Roma, Christiana e non Christina.’

In the preceding lines I have given the substance of the accounts of the Queen of Poland's ways and manner of life left us by a Roman chronicler (*Diario del Valesio*). And I believe the picture he gives us of Marysieńka's Roman existence to be correct. But it needs completing. And I bring forward another witness, the Florentine Resident, and a different aspect, supplied by him. Following his lead, we enter the Odescalchi Palace. Within it I am struck by the splendour of the style of living—there is a Marshal of the Palace, ladies and gentlemen in waiting, a whole Court in miniature. The pretensions of the mistress of the abode are on a par with

all this splendour. She expects the ambassadors to wait on her; and when the Austrian envoy refuses, she appeals to the Empress, who is her son's sister-in-law. She keeps open house. And how does she receive her guests? In the character of a disconsolate widow, the victim of a catastrophe which has accomplished the ruin of her house, and prepared the downfall of her adopted country? The answer to this question is supplied by a letter addressed, in 1702, to the Sovereign Pontiff, and which has found its way, how I know not, into the manuscript room at the British Museum:—

‘Having made a law to myself, Most Holy Father, to do nothing without the approbation of your Holiness, I beseech your Holiness to send me word whether it be your pleasure that I should have decent comedies performed in my own house, by a troop of actors in my pay.’

The French original, to be found below, proves that Marysieńka had never learned to spell, and we perceive she has forgotten the tragic moments through which she has lately lived.¹

Count Fede, the Florentine diplomat, also informs us that there were gay suppers and gambling parties in the exile's home. Clement XI. had been driven to take very severe measures against gambling; but the Queen of Poland, like Queen Christina (who used hers to shelter malefactors, instead of card-players), claimed special immunities. Marysieńka did not limit her love of worldly gaiety to the walls of her own mansion. She went out a great deal, and was a constant guest at the *Sabbatini* of Cardinal Barberini, and at the entertainments given by Prince Odescalchi in his house *fuori la Porta del Popolo*. These were always dinners, followed by a ball. When the guests dispersed at dawn, they attended mass in the neighbouring Church of St. Bartholomew. Even as in my own youth!

¹ ‘Mestant fait une loi, Saint-Père, de ne rien faire qui n'ait la probation de Votre Sainteté, ie la supplie de me mander sil aurt agréable qui ie fisse jouer des comédie honeste dans ma maison par une troupe de comediers que ie gaage.’

It was not a disagreeable existence, after all, for a fallen Queen, who had by no means been born on the steps of the throne. But it had the drawback of being exceedingly expensive, and Marysieńka fell into debt. Her family helped her in this matter; for besides Prince Alexander, who had followed her to Rome, she had many relations about her, and dependent on her. There was her second son Constantine, her grand-daughter Marie Casimire, whom her father James ill treated, and the Cardinal d'Arquien himself, who cost as much as four ordinary men. The two young Princes were soon following in his wake. Their mother's remonstrances, consequent on their early performances in France, had borne no fruit whatever. She was not, I fancy, more steady and consistent in this matter than in her political behaviour. M. Grottanelli and M. Rodocanachi have both given us the details of the burlesque romance in which the two good-for-nothing young fellows played their part, mingled with a certain amount of fiction. I will limit myself to a short summary of the contemporary history from which the two novelists have drawn their information. *La Tolla* was in those days the acknowledged mistress of the young son of Duke Sforza Cesarini. Prince Alexander fell in love with her, then Constantine followed his example, and Don Gaetano Cesarini caught the fair lady singing love-ditties under the windows of the Odescalchi Palace. In his rage he struck her with his sword; but Marysieńka had an armed guard, which interfered, and a pitched battle ensued, which disturbed the whole quarter. The Queen vowed it was a case of treason to her dignity, and, with all her old noisy and voluble eagerness, demanded the exile of the culprit. The diplomatic body refused to support this request, and she quarrelled with them all. Such a clamour did she raise, that Cesarini took alarm, and constituted himself *her* prisoner in the Castle of St. Angelo. He expected to stay there a few hours. She kept him a week; and then, tired of the fray, accepted his apologies, assuring him in her reply that he had driven her out of her natural course,

which was 'to oblige every one, and never to annoy any one.'

But this was not the end of *La Tolla*. Clement XI., an austere Pontiff, bitterly opposed to all profane gaieties, took it into his head, as Carnival was approaching, to exact a promise from the two Polish Princes, who had been the cause of the last scandal, not to disguise themselves in any manner. And he forbade all masquerades. *La Tolla* fancied the young Princes' undertaking did not affect her, and appeared on the Corso in a carriage, accompanied by other young women, belonging to the society usually frequented by Constantine and Alexander, all of them fancifully attired and masked. As an additional defiance of the Papal regulations, she herself mounted the box beside the coachman. The Papal *sbirri* did their duty; and *La Tolla*, stripped of her fine brocaded gown and gorgeous jewels, was first of all haled to prison, and then shut up in the Convent for penitent women, *alla Longara*; while the garments taken from her were conveyed, by the Pope's orders, to the Odescalchi Palace, and there made over to the Queen of Poland. Clement honestly returned her property to her.

But this did not satisfy Marysieńka. She deplored the evil life led by her sons, but everything belonging to them was sacred. She had carried a quite peculiar conception of the rights of royalty with her to the Eternal City. She demanded the immediate release of the courtesan, her companions, and the coachman (who had followed them to prison), and even insisted that the man's carriage and horses, which had been confiscated, according to the regulations, should be returned to him. There was another diplomatic battle, and endless correspondence. Marysieńka plunged joyfully into her natural element, and threw her whole heart into the contest. In vain did the Pope strive to convince her that she was encouraging her own children in a life of debauchery, and that Prince Constantine, who was up to his neck in debt, was already reduced to the most pitiful expedients. He had even pawned a sword which had been

given him by the Queen of England, who still expected him to make a better use of it. This vile woman was costing him ten thousand crowns a year, and was playing him false with one of his own liveried servants.

The member of the *Accademia degli Arcadi* had done everything but take up the cudgels for this harlot's reputation. She came to that at last. *La Tolla*, she affirmed, was by no means the woman for whom the Holy Father had taken her. She was well known as the wife of a respectable *employé*, and received in the best society. The Queen went so far as to mention a Marchesa Maccarani, in whose house, as a matter of fact, *La Tolla* had actually had the impudence to present herself, uninvited, on some festive occasion. And besides, *La Tolla* was *La Tolla* no longer. By virtue of the Queen's authority, she had been transformed into a noble lady and a Countess. When Marysieńka's arguments all fell flat, she went a step further, had the lady carried off *manu militari*, and brought the culprit and her lover together under the roof of the Odescalchi Palace. She actually played the part of pander, though she vowed the cause of virtue was furthered by her action. *La Tolla* and Prince Constantine were placed in opposite wings of the palace. The Queen chose to forget the existence of the connecting corridors.

At last the Pope grew angry, and talked of calling on his guard. There was a burst of fury on Marysieńka's part, and she declared she would instantly leave the city in which such an outrage had been put upon her. Not another night would she remain,—and she ordered her carriages to be harnessed. The Pope gave in. Cardinals Ottobuoni, Barberini, and Sacripanti were all sent, one after the other, to calm Her Majesty's 'extreme excitement' and arrange some compromise. This was discovered in the shape of *La Tolla's* departure for Naples. She travelled in a carriage drawn by six horses, with a full escort, wearing Prince Constantine's liveries, and carried away a purse of thirty thousand livres, which had come out of Marysieńka's pocket.

The close of the career of this adventuress is wrapped in

obscurity. But a collection of two hundred and twelve sonnets, preserved in the Angelica Library, perpetuates the memory of the *celebre puttana in tempo della Regina di Polonia* under the name of 'La Tolleide.'

I see no political method, properly so called, in all the stormy scenes amidst which the hero's widow scattered the remnants of the glorious inheritance she guarded so ill. She kept a careful eye on events, and did her best, incidentally, to play a part in them. Another letter, now in the British Museum, shows her communicating two pieces of important news to the Pope, in December 1702. The Elector of Brandenburg had sent Prince James full powers to treat with the King of Sweden; and the Tsar, having asked the hand of Princess Marie Casimire for his own son, her portrait had been forthwith despatched to him. This curious assertion must be received with some caution; for Peter the Great's son—the unhappy Alexis—had only just reached his twelfth year! In 1704, Marysienka believed herself about to return to active life, there to play a part of paramount importance. Events in Poland were apparently opening a new and promising horizon before the house of Sobieski. Charles XII of Sweden had vanquished Peter in Livonia, and Augustus II in Poland, and recommended Prince James as a fit candidate for the Polish throne. This time the mother did not hesitate to side with the son whom she had opposed eight years before. She sent his two brothers to his assistance, and wrote:—

'The King of Poland (Augustus II.) has driven us so far by the violence with which he has treated us, that I think you will not hesitate to join the Republic, at the head of which is the Primate, and beg it will protest against the ill-will shown us by the King, whose sole object, ever since his election, has been to put down our family. . . . Since our modesty and patience has brought us nothing but scorn, we must resort to some other means. . . .'

But Augustus II was a man of resource. He was unlucky on the battle-field, but he was a past master in the art of

preparing ambuscades. On the 29th of February 1704, James Sobieski, in response to the summons of his Polish partisans, started for the frontier, accompanied by his brother Constantine. Within half a league of Breslau, a troop of Saxon Dragoons surrounded his carriage. In vain did the two Princes protest. Even here, on the Emperor's ground, violent hands were laid on the person of Her Imperial Majesty's brother-in-law. The prisoners were conducted, in the first place, to the fortress of Pleissenberg, and thence to that of Königsstein.

This time there is a touching ring about Marysieńka's accents. Age was certainly telling on her.

'What a mortal blow, my beloved son!' she writes to Alexander. 'Why have I survived so sad a piece of news? I, who would so willingly spend what little life remains to me to save you both! If it is necessary, for the satisfaction of the tyrant's merciless hatred of us all, that to ensure him against us, some member of the family should remain in his hands, I am willing to enter his prison—if only my dear children may be free, and their lives saved.'

She must have had a shrewd suspicion that the 'tyrant' would not take her at her word, and she had some consolation in her trouble:—

'The Empress has written to me in very touching terms, and has informed me of the Emperor's anger at this indignity, and of how much he takes it to heart. . . . His Holiness . . . has sent me Cardinal Sacripanti, *in flocchi*, with an open letter, all written by his own hand. . . . The whole of the Sacred College, especially Cardinals Sacripanti and Ottobuoni, have shown great feeling, and so has Cardinal Janson. But all in general, both men and women, and every person of condition, feel it deeply; every one, great and small, is thrown into real consternation. When the sad news was known, all the convents fell to praying, and I trust the Lord, as the Holy Father says, has desired, by thus touching me on such a tender spot, to make me share His Passion (*sic*).'

She did not forget either the *fiocchi*, or the Pontiff's autograph, or the people of condition—yet I am inclined to believe she felt the matter deeply. Here is the end of her letter:—

‘Tell me whether I can serve you in any manner,—if you think I should go and solicit the various Powers myself. I would willingly sacrifice myself, old and infirm as I am, to save your lives and liberties. I only care for my life for your sakes, my dear children, to whom I send my blessing, praying God to send you all His prosperity, and kissing you with all my heart.’

There is no sign, here, of the Marysieńka of old days, and I am inclined to think she was really moving at last towards that hermitage whither such uneasy spirits as hers are fain to retire, and which must, surely, contain a corner specially devoted to the fair sex.

But she was not called upon to put her proffered sacrifice to the test. In spite of the deliberate offence involved in the violation of Austrian territory, the Court of Vienna confined itself to a purely formal protest, and the prisoners' mother had good reason to believe in the Emperor's secret complicity. Prince Alexander did not yield to the temptation of taking his brother's place, and attempting to reach a crown which the Saxon, dethroned though he was, appeared so well able to defend. He was eager to find himself back in Rome, where other ladies like *La Tolla* awaited him. In vain did his mother offer, if he would face the adventure, to find means, in case of failure, to purchase him the Duchy of Nevers. Augustus the Strong kept the bolts of Königstein safely drawn until 1706; and when, more and more completely overwhelmed by his merciless antagonist, he was forced, at last, to relinquish both his prisoners and his crown, the throne was already held by Leszczyński.

Marysieńka lived on at Rome. But every year the rank she insisted on keeping up became more difficult to support. Of the considerable dowry she had amassed in Poland,

nothing now reached her. Saxons, Swedes, and Poles were all quarrelling over the shreds. Her other resources were exhausted. In 1705 she buried her father, and thus made a considerable economy. That most extraordinary of Cardinals died at the age of ninety-seven years. His tomb is still to be seen in the Church of San Luigi de' Francesi. But the Princes Constantine and Alexander grew more and more extravagant. Their mother thought, for a moment, of retiring to Glatz, where her son James had at last been appointed Governor, at a yearly salary of fifteen thousand livres. But the Emperor put an absolute veto on the plan. He had no fancy for taking on the Pope's responsibilities.

In 1714, every expedient was exhausted, and she made up her mind to a sacrifice more real than that she had offered her children ten years previously. She resolved to do away with her court—that phantom dignity which she was no longer able to support. But she was determined the Romans should not witness this final downfall. She negotiated for permission to return to France. Louis XIV. was still alive, and would, she hoped, condescend to grant a welcome to his former subject, whom he had refused to receive when she expected to be treated as his equal, but whom he would now find ready to abate most of her claims—of whom he might in times past have had reason to complain, but who was ready, now, to come back to his feet, humble and repentant, and who, after all, by that return, would add some brightness to the sun of his glory, already somewhat paled.

The only information we possess concerning this negotiation is to be found in the curt and ill-natured sentences of St. Simon.

'Not knowing how to bestow herself, she came home to die, having done all the harm she could to her own country, which repaid her in kind. . . . After the manner in which she had behaved, it is not surprising that her request for permission to return to the place of her birth was coldly

received, and that authority to follow her inclination in this matter was slow in coming. . . . The King consented at last, but on condition that she did not venture to visit, nor even to approach, the Court, or Paris. She was allowed to select a town on the Loire, and even given her choice between the Castles of Blois, Amboise, and Chambord.'

She fixed her choice on Blois, and in June 1714, she embarked on one of the Pope's galleys, which was to carry her to the coast of France.

IV

Her grand-daughter, Marie-Casimire, bore her company. Her son Alexander, who was to have escorted her, was called back to Rome, at the last moment, by the news of a fresh scuffle between the *sbirraglia* of the Cardinal-Governor of the City and the Guards of the Odescalchi Palace, where the Queen had left some portion of her furniture. This sudden return was to prove fatal to the young Prince. When Marysienka landed at Marseilles, she heard her son was confined to his bed. The terrible fever of the Roman Campagna was upon him. He died on the 19th of the following November, leaving orders that he should be buried within the Capuchin Convent, and in the habit of that order. Hence the tale concerning his religious vocation, one for which he never really showed the slightest inclination.

The name on which the hero of Vienna had cast so much glory was fated to disappear. Three years later, a divorce was pronounced at Rome between Prince Constantine and his wife, a Fraülein Wessel, formerly maid-of-honour to the Princess of Neuburg. The marriage itself had been a folly, the rupture was a piece of baseness. All Constantine gained by it was to die, in 1727, childless and unhonoured. James had only daughters, who found it by no means easy to secure husbands. Marie-Casimire was betrothed, for a few days, to an old Duke of Modena, and was later suggested as a wife for the King of Spain, but she died an old maid, in

1723. One of her sisters, Marie-Charlotte, made up her mind, somewhat late in the day, to go back to France, the cradle of her mother's family, and married Charles Godfroy de la Tour d'Auvergne, Duc de Bouillon. Yet another sister, Marie-Clementine, was destined to a more romantic fate. She was bound up with the fortunes of another unlucky sovereign, was the heroine of a dramatic story, and the innocent cause of fresh calamities to her unfortunate family. She became the wife of the Pretender, the Chevalier de St. Georges—the proscribed Stuart Prince.

When the Emperor heard of the marriage, he fell into a fury, threatened Prince James with exile, and sent his officers of justice to track the betrothed couple, who had taken to flight. The bride was caught, and imprisoned at Innsbrück. The Chevalier contrived to rescue her, and carried her off, first to Venice, and then to Rome, where they were safe. Clement XI., with great nobility of heart, faced the rage of the Viennese Court and the fury of the English one, which had set a price of two millions and a half on the Pretender's head. The Savelli Palace was placed at the young couple's disposal. There the Stuart family was to dwell for a whole century, and there Clementine died in 1734, only a year after her own father.

Marysienka was not to witness this strange continuation of her own romance. During the last moments of her stay in Rome, some presentiment of her approaching end oppressed her, and she made her will. The journey to Marseilles tried her sorely. There she found her nephew, the young Marquis de Béthune, father of the future Maréchale de Belle-Isle, waiting to welcome her. She desired that no honours might be paid her anywhere; 'for fear,' St. Simon has it, 'they might not be such as she would have wished!' Yet she was splendidly received by Marshal de Villeroi, made a short stay at the Château des Bordes, where her sister gave her a no less magnificent reception, and reached Blois in September.

A goodly number of Polish servants still remained about

her, and these waited on her carefully, and surrounded her with a certain amount of royal state. The rooms intended for her occupation were not ready. She took up her quarters in the lower part of the Castle, and lived there, modestly, almost poorly, 'without any splendour,' St. Simon tells us again, 'and with all the lack of consideration she deserved.'

The assertions of the ill-natured chronicler, doubted as they frequently and very justly are, receive confirmation, this time, from a humbler, but, for that very reason perhaps, a less dubious witness. The National Archives contain the correspondence of an *Intendant des bâtiments du Roi* at Blois, with his official superiors. M. de la Bastière, a young and learned writer, has recently published some interesting notes upon these letters, in the *Annales de Loir-et-Cher*. It was part of the worthy M. Chuppin's duty to forward the Queen of Poland's constant complaints as to the condition of her new dwelling. The walls were split, the chimneys smoked, and the doors would not shut. These grumblings fell on deaf ears, or at the utmost only elicited others in reply. The Queen's Polish servants it was who destroyed the Castle, it was said. In vain did Chuppin declare that the discomfort of her dwelling was sufficient to compromise Her Majesty's health, and that her very life was threatened. The inclement winter of 1716 proved the truth of his words. On the 30th of January he wrote:—

'For several days past the Queen of Poland had been suffering discomfort from want of sleep, caused by anxiety (windows that would not shut perhaps), which, however, did not prevent her from leaving her bed, dressing, and taking her meals at table, as she did even yesterday at dinner-time, when I had the honour of seeing her. Her doctor (M. Fleurant, a name which Molière has borrowed) ordered her a certain remedy at eight o'clock at night. Her Majesty submitted, against her will, and died at half-past eight, without having had time to receive either the Blessed Sacrament or Extreme Unction. This day she lies in state on her bed, with her face uncovered.'

One last happiness was vouchsafed her before she died—a visit from her son-in-law, the Elector of Bavaria. But it was only a gleam. The Prince's visit did not last more than a day, and after that nothing but suffering was left for the D'Arquien Queen.

Once more St. Simon speaks—

'She lived and died as a private individual, and was treated as such; and so was her grand-daughter, who departed, without having any honour paid her by the Court, to join her father, James Sobieski, in Silesia.'

But here I detect a flagrant mistake in the chronicler's assertion; for on March 8th, 1716, Chuppin reports—

'The body of the Queen of Poland still lies in the State Chamber. There is no talk of its removal, although next Tuesday will be the fortieth day since her death.'

The funeral services did not take place until the fourth day of the following April. A 'private individual' would have been buried out of sight far sooner! This is what occurred during the interval. The moment the news of the Queen's death reached the Duc d'Orléans—then Regent of France—he gave directions that she should be buried at the King's expense, 'with all the honours due to her rank.' Orders to this effect were sent to the Bishop of Blois; and the Regent even despatched a Master of the Ceremonies, M. Desgrandes, to help and advise the prelate as to the arrangements to be made. This carries us far from the spiteful and discourteous version put forward by the famous chronicler!

The Bishop and his assistant found themselves in a difficulty. The necessary elements for such a funeral ceremony as seemed fitting to the circumstances did not exist at Blois. Further, it appeared only proper to request the orders of the dead Queen's eldest son, Prince James. Would he care to leave his mother's body in France? Would he not prefer to have it removed to Silesia, where he himself resided, or to Poland? Marysienka's grand-daughter, Princess Marie Casimire, said her say in the

matter, and her remarks made the organisation of the ceremony yet more difficult, and increased the perplexity of those concerned in it. Were they not spending too much money? Back came the answer from Paris—The thing must be ordered fittingly, but simply. 'On such occasions, the honour consists in the King's orders that whatever is done shall be performed in his name, and on his account.' And finally, the preacher selected to pronounce the funeral discourse was taken at a disadvantage. He knew nothing of the life and actions he was expected to eulogise.

All these difficulties wasted much time, and gave rise to a hot correspondence, traces of which still remain in the Archives of the French Foreign Office (Poland, 1716). It affords eloquent proof of the fact that St. Simon has slandered the courtesy and generosity of his own country.

A compromise was found at last. The expense was reduced, and the ceremonial simplified, by giving up the idea of performing the last ceremonies in the Cathedral. By general agreement, the Church of St. Sauveur, which was smaller, and nearer the Castle, was chosen; and the Bishop of Blois pointed out 'that it had already been honoured by the presence of the corpses of other princes and princesses, who had departed their lives in this city, and more specially those of two Queens of France, Anne de Bourgogne and Marie de Medicis.'

Marysienka herself could hardly have complained at being in such company!

But, on the other hand, according to another local chronicler (see the St. Laumier MS. in the Blois Archives), 'none of the regular public bodies were convened,' and this proceeding seems to have been caused by the unjustifiable and unexplained pretensions of the Polish Princess.

Poor D'Arquien Queen! tormented and humiliated, even in death, by those of her own blood!

Her own country, at all events, had no hand in this matter;

and when her Polish grand-daughter departed, she received very different treatment from that imagined, and probably desired, by St. Simon. At her request, the eighty-four coffers which constituted her personal baggage were sent, free of cost, into Silesia, whither she departed, to her father's house. As for the mortal remains of her who had been called Queen, Astrea, and Rose, my readers will shortly learn their fate.

Her will, dated 20th April 1713, and 23rd February 1714, has been published by M. Bonvallet in the third volume of the *Bulletin de la Société Nivernaise* (1869.) It is commonplace, and not particularly interesting; but it gives proof that her clear perception of material interests was by no means dulled by age, that her consciousness of moral duty was sharper than we might have thought, and that her sense of Christian humility was not less surprising:—

'I beseech the Serenissime Princes, my children, to pay my creditors, so that my soul may not be kept in torment. I think they will be able to do this with the money falling due to me in France, and without touching the capital of my fortune. I beg that as soon as I am dead, ten thousand masses may be said by the Capuchins, one hundred at a time, to obtain God's mercy, which I beseech for all the sins I have committed during my whole life, for which I very humbly pray His pardon, having no hope for the remission of my faults, save in the Death and Passion of my Lord Jesus Christ, and the merits of His holy Mother . . .

'I promised the Guardian Angels, on a certain occasion, to build a chapel in their honour. There is one at Wysocko (erroneously written *Luisosco* in the publication of the *Société Nivernaise*). But as this no longer belongs to me, I beg the Serenissime Princes, my children, will build another on my own ground. . . .

'I have also promised that when Pope Innocent XI. is canonised or beatified—which I trust by God's grace will come to pass—I will build him a chapel. Old as I am, I cannot expect this to happen in my time, and I request and

charge the Serenissime Prince, Alexander, who has the happiness of being his godson, to see to it. . . .

'As to the burial of my body, I leave the Princes, my children, to dispose of it as they shall choose; and seeing such a corpse as mine is not worthy of being carried far, and in spite of my desire to be buried beside the King, my Lord I do not think it would be well to bury me elsewhere than in the country where I may chance to die. . . .

'I also beg the Serenissime Princes, my sons, will raise a monument to the late King, their father, in the Capuchin Church at Warsaw, worthy of his glorious memory, with his statue in bronze or metal, after the designs I have shown them. . . .

'I also pray and beseech the Serenissime Princes, my sons, as soon as I am dead, to place one of my small bonds for twenty thousand livres in the hands of the Rev. Father Louis, Capuchin, my Confessor, so that he may dispose of the income it produces in favour of certain charities which he is charged to distribute, according to the directions I have given him under seal of confession, and of which I forbid that any other person should have knowledge. . . .

'I also expect that the Princes, my dear sons, will do me (the pleasure) of showing kindness to all my old and faithful servants, to whom I desire to leave evident marks of the satisfaction their faithful services, rendered during many years, have given me. . . . I desire that as they have spent their life in my service, they may be assigned the means of a comfortable livelihood out of my own property . . .'

Then follows a list of these pensions, and a statement of the property from which they are to be drawn: a capital of 1,565,324 livres, with the lands of Prie and Imphy, and a share of the lands of Maligny in France, and the domains of Tarnopol and Olesko in Poland. The lands of Prie only brought in 1650 livres yearly, and those of Imphy 2150. The Polish properties were of great extent, but heavily charged, and difficult to turn to account. Marysienka also left a property at Warsaw, consisting of several houses and a

garden, which bore the name of Marieville. No trace of this now remains.

Poor Queen! poor Marysieńka!

On what occasion was it that she vowed her chapel to the Guardian Angels? I have my suspicions. But before her coffin I will hold my peace.

CHAPTER XII

THE LAST NUPTIAL COUCH

My closing chapter shall be short.

I have no more history to give my readers, only a legend—but a touching one! I loathe legends, when, as too often happens, they disfigure and destroy the personages of my story.

But this tale is one I love, and I am certain it will please my audience too—reason enough, in all good sooth, that we should take it to be true! Where shall we find, in history, the ‘true truth’ of the Italians?

The tomb of Sobieski's wife and widow is not at Blois. Eager and restless as she had been in life, she had not desired to journey after she was dead. Yet the final repose to which she had aspired was not granted her at once, nor in that French soil on which she had elected to die. Within a few days of her funeral, she was on the move once more.

A mystery hangs over this final journey. The Polish archives are dumb. The country was shaken, at that moment, by a convulsion which scattered all documents, and every memory, to the four winds of heaven.

The hero of Vienna himself was to wait half a century before he was carried to his rightful resting-place in the crypt of the Wawel Cathedral, beneath the altar before which he had been crowned. His ashes were left in the safe keeping of the Capuchin monks at Warsaw, and this temporary arrangement was to endure till 1733.

But here is my legend:—

One evening in May 1716, the porter of the Capuchin Monastery, dozing within his gate, was roused by the sharp

clangour of the bell. He tarried a moment before answering the summons, and when at last he turned the key, he saw no man on the threshold. But across it lay a black casket, which seemed to have been lately placed there. He summoned his brother monks, the casket was opened, and revealed, within a silk-lined coffin, the corpse of an aged woman. A crown was on her head, a sceptre and a hand of justice lay at her feet, and in her mouth there was a medal bearing her name.

It was Marysieńka.

How came the corpse there? No one knew then, no man knows now. A learned Polish writer, M. Zawadzki, has accepted the story in his biography of the Princes James and Constantine, published in 1862. I gladly follow his example.

I would fain believe that love, stronger than death, worked a miracle, in answer to the call of a tenderness which had vowed to outlive the tomb, and granted the supplication of the most peerless lover woman ever knew.

Often, in the old days, he had sighed to share his camp-bed with his beloved. Yet once again he called her back to him, and back she came, to clasp him close in a supreme embrace, which no mortal power, thenceforward, was ever to disturb.

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