

"Madame, I have taken the liberty of bringing a friend with me," said De Maupeou. "Monsieur de Beautrellis of the Guards, Madame la Baronne Linden."

Beautrellis, a magnificent man of the type of Monsieur Beauregard, looked around him, saw De Sartines and bowed.

He did not know in the least what was going to happen. De Maupeou had told him something about a conspiracy. If so, where were the conspirators?—for all these people were of the court. He saw Madame de Stenlis, and bowed; he had danced with her only two nights ago. What in the name of wonder was she doing here? He bowed to Madame d'Harlancourt, nodded to De Joyeuse, and then turned his eyes to his hostess.

"Rosine," said the baroness to the maid, who had not yet left the room, "has Placide returned yet?"

"No, Madame."

The baroness glanced at the clock; it was after nine. De Maupeou noticed her anxiety and guessed that Placide—whoever he might be—was a main-spring in her design. He forced himself to be patient, and drawing up to Madame de Stenlis began to talk on indifferent topics, while Madame Linden turned her attention again to Behrens, speaking also