

audience of your Majesty, on pressing business.

KING.—(*Impatiently.*) Oh, shew her in. (*Exit Cham.*) Distraction upon distraction! what can the old Dragon want? Calmness, Louis, calmness!

*Chamarante ushers in Duchess de Navailles.*

CHAM.—The Duchess de Navailles. (*Exit.*)

KING.—Your grace's sudden application leads us to fear that you are the bearer of evil tidings. Nothing, we trust relating to the health of our amiable consort?

DE N.—Nothing, Sire! Her Majesty's health is just now improving—but—

KING.—She may, perchance, be sufficiently restored to grace our entertainment, this evening, in the gardens. St. Aignan, director of the festivities, promises to surpass himself in the brilliancy of the arrangements. A most exquisite masque—"the pleasures of the enchanted Isle"—charming title is it not?

DE N.—(*aside.*)—Frivolous. (*aloud.*) Her Majesty's spirits will not allow her to assist.

KING.—Ah! this protracted illness; most distressing. But what procures us the advantage of your presence?

DE N.—Sire! an extraordinary and mysterious affair.

KING.—(*aside.*)—Another remonstrance. I must cut it short. (*aloud.*) Be brief Madam! We graciously condescended to overlook that ridiculous affair at Fontainebleau, beware of its repetition at Versailles.

DE N.—I have it in command from your Majesty's royal mother---

KING.—Our mother! pray proceed. (*aside.*) How these old women torment me.

DE N.—To inform you that a letter of a suspicious nature, has chanced to fall into my hands.

KING.—From whom?

DE N.—Ostensibly written by his Majesty of Spain to his daughter, our Queen.

KING.—Well! We presume this sort of correspondence can scarcely be calculated to offend your grace's rigid notions of propriety. It does not come within the compass of a billet doux, however tender its contents.

DE N.—Your Majesty misunderstands! I said *ostensibly* from the King of Spain. The seal and superscription are authentic, but the writing of the enclosure differs widely from that of the envelope. The style and phraseology also are suspicious. French phrases translated into indifferent Spanish, not transmitted, either, through the usual channel. I found it accidentally on my table.

KING. Mysterious, truly! as you observe. (*anxiously.*) Have you yet shewn it to the Queen?

DE N.—I withheld it, fearing that it might contain intelligence touching her royal parent, whose health is precarious, which might, if abruptly communicated, affect your royal consort.

KING.—Most discreet! And so you brought it at once to us?

DE N.—At the recommendation of the Queen Mother.

KING.—(*aside.*) Punctilious idiot. (*aloud and angrily, taking letter.*) Ha! how's this, open! have you dared to peruse it?

DE N.—At the command of the Queen Dowager I translated it.