

## VERSAILLES

however, indulging in a very harmless pleasure before a very limited public, and often in the King's presence. She performed the fashionable plays and comic operas, and the last she took part in was Beaumarchais's *Barber of Seville*.

No visitor ever omitted to repair to the further end of the park of Little Trianon, there to inspect the group of rustic houses that formed Marie Antoinette's Hamlet. The design and arrangement of these charming little houses were most carefully thought out by the Queen's experts in rural architecture, in order to ensure the most picturesque and pleasing views. The best view of the principal houses reflected in the water is to be obtained by walking round the lake.

The building of the Hamlet, which was finished in 1786, was the last flight of Marie Antoinette's imagination. It is in accordance with the taste of the time, which tended towards the life of the fields, and opposed the simplicity of rustic manners to the luxury and artificiality of the life of towns. The princesses, who were always surrounded by courtiers and lackeys, must have taken a real pleasure in drawing closer to the humble folk whom they had only seen in the far distance, in watching them attending to their various pursuits, and in studying their opinions and their simple language. For the Ham-