

humiliated by any debasing act provided they might increase their opportunities of gain, at the expense of the State. D'Argenson, the Minister of War, protected the military aristocracy by using the ancient ordinance of the kingdom to prevent the King swamping the service by these miserable parvenus, without merit, ancestry and honor. And Montesquieu, the author of "L'Esprit des Lois," who witnessed the entire proceeding wrote the warning: "All is lost when the lucrative profession of the note-shaver and speculator by its richness is made a profession of honor."

The King developed also a taste for the society of sporting women, which caused a scandal at his court and an estrangement to exist between him and members of his own family—especially with his eldest son, afterwards Louis XVI, a good, conscientious but weak man who expiated the result of his father's criminality on the guillotine in 1792. To avoid this inharmonious display at court, the King was on the lookout for some favorite outside the nobility who could gratify his desires without such an ado being made of it.

Now a girl named Jeanne Antoinette Poisson (in English "Fish") who was born 20th Dec., 1721, Rue Clery, Paris, was in the habit of driving a pony phaeton in the park on those afternoons when the King was out for a drive himself. It was her purpose to show herself to the King, since she was very beautiful. Moreover, a fortune-teller, when she was but nine years of age, had predicted that she would arrive to the position of being mistress of the King of France—in everything but name, the Queen. Her people, of the ordinary gross and unlettered class who had become rich—like most of that sort—by "ways that are" and tricks that are vain," were superstitious and believed firmly in this tale of the fortune-teller. They were led, therefore, to back any scheme which might bring their young and beautiful relative at close quarters with the King—out of which encounter the whole company of them expected to gain rank and fabulous wealth. Old Poisson, the girl's father, son of a dyer, had run away from home in early life and had become the driver of one of the provision waggons of the Paris brothers, who were contractors to supply the army with stores under a government contract. These Paris brothers were in business, not for their own health exactly, much less for the health of the State, as some of their money transactions were not above suspicion. So well did wag-

goner Poisson serve these brothers that they recognized in him a man "after their own heart," and they advanced him to a clerkship. After a while Poisson was able to do something for himself, and he did it so forcibly that \$200,000 of the nation's money disappeared from his hands, leaving no trace behind. An inquiry was held and a trial followed in which Poisson was declared a thief and sentenced to be hung, but he escaped and fled to Holland. His wife, who was the daughter of a butcher, who had obtained a contract to supply the "Hotel des Invalides" with meat—another "financier"—was a very beautiful woman and was now alone. Her enforced isolation attracted the sympathy of yet another "financier" named Lenormand, otherwise known as "de Tourneheim," who was former-general of the revenue. The intimacy resulted in this great "financier" accepting the belief that the little girl would be the King's mistress and the means of further enriching all her friends—and they were a pretty gang! He opened his purse, therefore, by way of investing in an education for her and sent her to one of the most famous educational convents in France. Afterwards he married her to his nephew—a stupid, but affectionate sort of a chap—named Lenormand D'Etiolles, whose father was Treasurer-General of the Moneys. In this society one might plainly perceive that nothing could be heard but the sound of dueats. Lenormand de Tourneheim saw his way all the more clearly when one of his relatives, a certain Binet, was appointed lackey to the King's son and had the keys of the private apartments. So he sent his nephew, the loving but stupid husband of the young beauty off on a mission, cocked and primed Binet and furnished the "financial backing" for the phaeton-rides of the young wife in the King's park. That she saw in her own marriage to his nephew, in her own education, in every previous act, but so many stepping stones to her ambition, the voluminous evidence collected by de Nulhae in his "Louis XV et Madame de Pompadour," is sufficient proof. That her ambition was fostered and promoted by the gang of "speculators" of the type of the Lenormands and Parises there is equal proof and without which "promotion" it is equally certain that it would have been in vain.

On the 25th Feb., 1745, at a bal masqué she encountered the King for the first time at a public reception. The ball was given at Versailles and in order that such as this young woman, now Madame