

COUN.—Be calm! tell us what has happened?

MAD.—Slighted! (*sighs*). Neglected! (*weeps*). Compelled to witness his odious assiduities—without the power of shutting my ears to his fulsome compliments to my own dependant! (*speaks with energy*). I knew it—I told you so! that deceitful creature, clothing her designs under the semblance of timidity, has achieved her triumph, and captivated Louis. Oh, that I could annihilate her!

DE G.—Be composed.

COUN.—Be patient—some means may be discovered—

MAD.—Patient! composed! listen to my story—and then talk of composure. The hounds, as usual, held the stag at bay—an easy prey: the King alighting from the *caleche*, received the *couteau de chasse* from the hands of the huntsman.

DE G.—And presented it to you—a matter of course!

MAD.—To me! no—there lies the indignity! putting aside my proffered hand, he presented the weapon to La Valliere!

COUN.—Your attendant?

MAD.—Conferring on her, in my presence, the privilege of giving the *coup de grace*.

DE G.—Unheard of breach of etiquette!

MAD.—She hesitated—

COUN.—Affectation!

MAD.—Humanity—his Majesty called it!

COUN.—Infatuation!

MAD.—She burst into a flood of tears.

COUN.—The crocodile!

MAD.—Then, on her knees, implored his Majesty to spare the life of the 'poor brute.' Oh, I could have snatched the knife, and smitten her! The King forsooth, praised her tender nature—mingled his tears with hers—and—

DE G.—Louis received the wound—and not the stag.

MAD.—He called her an angel,—the coquette!—handed her, tenderly, back to the carriage, leaving me to follow, unheeded—unassisted.

COUN.—Oh, monstrous! The girl is a more finished hypocrite than I gave her credit for. But still she may be baffled!

MAD.—Heaven send it, but how?

DE G.—Alarm the Queen mother.

COUN.—No earthly use. The Dowager will not consent to peril the little power she now retains over her son: he resists her authority on all occasions. But Monsieur! the King's brother—your Highness's consort!

MAD.—My husband! a mere nonentity.

*Enter Bontemps.*

COUN.—Ha! Bontemps—what news?

DE G.—Is the King coming?

BOX.—No, my Lord, his Majesty has just retired to his private Cabinet—to meditate, half distracted, I may say—torn asunder—by love and jealousy.

DE G.—Jealous! of whom, pray?

BOX.—Of Mons. de Lauzun, I suspect. The lady as yet I have not discovered: at times my conjectures rest on Madlle de Houdancourt—at others on La Valliere.

MAD.—The latter—depend upon it.

DE G.—At all events he is jealous—that is something.