

appealed to by her companions, breathless with anxiety, when in lisping accents she confessed, what! think you?

MAD.—Good gracious, De Guiche, don't be so provoking.

DE G.—(imitating)—'My own opinion' said she, 'is, that none of those you have mentioned can be compared for grace, for elegance, for all the attributes of manly beauty to'—now guess!

MAD.—The King!

COUN.—The King! and he listening, overheard?

DE G.—Every syllable! The other inmates of the confessional with mingled indignation and astonishment, exclaimed, or rather sneered. 'so Mademoiselle, nothing less than a crown can charm your disinterested fancy.'

MAD.—Well, well, what next?

DE G.—'The crown' continued the oracle, 'detracts from, far more than it contributes to the graces of the wearer.'

MAD.—Condemnate subtlety! she was aware that he was listening.

COUN.—Oh! no question!

DE G.—On Bontemps' assurance, ladies, I venture to differ from you. The King, he says, as much amazed as he was enchanted, soon recovered from his temporary trance, and is now intent in discovering the syren who poured, unconsciously, such flattering incense on his ear.

COUN.—Unconscious! impossible!

MAD.—The refinement of artifice! it must have been La Valliere!

DE G.—Not at all improbable—but time will show.

MAD.—A more insidious piece of finesse never was devised by woman!

COUN.—She! no, I cannot believe a country chit could be so accomplished in cunning: not that I disparage the capabilities of your rural divinities.

MAD.—Countess, this incredulity amounts to downright infidelity—you must be a Jansenist?

COUN.—Thank goodness, the King is not within hearing of an accusation for which even I should be excommunicated. But hush! here comes the Duchess de Navailles!

DE G.—Generalissima of the Maids of Honor! No sinecure if all we hear be true.

MAD.—See! she is speaking to herself—gesticulating vehemently.

DE G.—And tossing her dear old head indignantly, as if the virtue of antiquity had been assailed.

COUN.—Nay, it is evident something extraordinary must have happened! Suppose we question her adroitly, and endeavour to turn her virtuous indignation to account.

*Enter Duchess de Navailles.*

DE N.—Ycs, I am resolved—I will appeal at once, in person to his Majesty. The audacity of these licentious minions must be checked.

COUN.—Your Grace seems somewhat disconcerted! Anything serious happened?

DE N.—Only imagine, ladies, such an insult! the sanctity of the private apartments violated—all my precautions set at naught. Would you believe it—last night a monster—

DE G.—A monster!

DE N.—Ycs! a man, actually within the very corridor.

MAD.—And who, pray, was the adventurous individual so lost to all sense of propriety?