

LOUIS LE GRAND: OR. FONTAINEBLEAU AND VERSAILLES.

ACT II.

SCENE 1st.—*La petite galerie du Roi, a small saloon at Versailles.**Enter Countess.*

COUN.—The King not yet arrived! how extraordinary! The hunting party quitted Fontainebleau early this morning: it is now past noon, and they have not yet reached Versailles. (*Carriages, horses, &c. heard entering court yard.*) Oh! they come at last. (*Enter De Guiche in hunting suite of the period.*) Monsr. De Guiche, where is her highness? what have you all been doing? what has become of the King?

DE G.—A thousand pardons, Countess, for appearing before you thus accoutred—this moment emancipated from that tedious ceremony, his Majesty is pleased to call, the chase.

COUN.—At best a very slow affair, especially to you, who have been accustomed to enjoy the pastime in England—where I am told they manage matters differently.

DE G.—Differently! you shall judge! fancy—compelled to curb your own impatience, and your steed's, in obedience to the tardy progression of a *caleche*, drawn by pigny ponies, whose most accelerated pace scarcely exceeds the progression of a rocking horse! Contrast with this an exciting gallop across country, on the back of a gallant hunter, leaping hedges, flying over ditches, swimming rivers,—the stag in view,—the horns in full cry,—the—

COUN.—In short, a perfect contrast! I feel for you. But what can possibly have detained you so much longer than usual?

DE G.—The King's persisting in a snail's pace, pretending, forsooth, that rapid motion would incommode La Valliere!

COUN.—What! that creature in the *caleche*?

DE G.—(*sneering*). Do you imagine that Louis could be separated from his Louise?

COUN.—And Madame?

DE G.—Obliged to give up her place, and do propriety with her back to the ponies. La Valliere was squeamish!

COUN.—Oh! I have no patience! Do you know, Count, I begin to participate in her Highness's apprehensions, concerning this girl. Especially as I learn that Bontemps is of the same opinion. If they are right, adieu to our ascendancy: unless we can devise some scheme for nipping this growing passion in the bud.

DE G.—Budding! say rather, full blown, forced into premature expansion by thick coming events.

Enter Madame, much agitated.

MAD.—Oh, Countess! such an affront—such an indignity! My dear De Guiche, hand me a chair, for heaven's sake! I shall expire! (*De Guiche hands chairs to ladies.*)

COUN.—The Count has just informed me. I cannot wonder at your emotion.

MAD.—You don't know all! Oh! let me breathe awhile! for after the degradation—I feel—ha! ha! (*laughs hysterically.*) suffocation—oh! your flacon! quick, your flacon! (*Countess holds smelling bottle—De Guiche fans her with his hat.*)