

Duvernay with a visit. It was this that led to the financial training of Beaumarchais. Duvernay was overflowing with gratitude, gave him an interest in some of his speculations, introduced him to the mysteries of financing, which Beaumarchais studied with his accustomed energy; in some speculations Duvernay assisted him with his money or credit, in all with his advice. With such a master of finance as Duvernay was universally reputed to be,—and his successful operations would appear to prove that the general belief was not ill-founded,—it would have been strange, indeed, if so apt a pupil had not gained by his instructions and his example. Determined to obtain a patent of nobility, Beaumarchais forced his father to give up his honest means of livelihood. How he went to Spain and perfected himself in the art of speculation, with no happy result to his fortunes, how he fought for his life with the Maupeou Parliament, lost his civil status, which he only regained by acting as a secret agent for the King—the word spy is not a pleasant term to apply to a gentleman of such varied attainments—these, with his love affairs, his theatrical fortunes, his life as a man of pleasure, need not be told. The manner in which he succeeded in engaging France in the struggle between Great Britain and her colonies is the main object to which this account of the training of the man to whom the United States owed so much, forms an introduction.

From the very outbreak of the revolt in the American Colonies, Caron de Beaumarchais was watching the movement with the warmest interest. It is clear, as much from what is suppressed as from what is told, that a desire to make money had as much to do with the eagerness to serve the Colonies as love of liberty or a disinterested desire to help the weak against the strong. He had good ground to work on. The conditions of the Treaty of Paris, of 1763, still rankled in the minds of the French; the loss of Canada was one, but by no means the most important element that entered into the feelings of hatred to Great Britain and the sincere wish to do her all the harm possible consistent with safety and reputation. Of comparatively slight value in a material point of view, but galling beyond measure to such a nation, was the clause in the treaty which compelled the dismantling of Dunkirk, a part of their own territory. It was one of the best fortified posts in the kingdom, but the works were demolished

in accordance with the terms of the Treaty of Utrecht, in 1713. The fortifications were renewed, but the Treaty of Paris, of 1763, decreed that they should be again demolished. Such a grievance was one on which the most fiery appeals to the popular imagination and sensibilities could be relied on for the desired result; an insult, real or supposed, is less easily forgiven than a positive, downright injury.

The position of Beaumarchais is a striking commentary on the state of France in the years preceding the first Revolution. An outlaw, having been deprived of his civil rights by a solemn decree of the courts, he had yet free admission to the person of the young King, Louis XVI, not through the minister but directly, and wrote questions on public policy, which he presented to the King, who at his request answered categorically with his own hand. Some of these questions are curious, one is tempted to call them impertinent, from an outlawed subject to his King, the fountain of power and honour. Many of them may be passed over, to deal with those directly affecting the question of the policy towards Great Britain and her colonies. In answer to the question by Beaumarchais, whether he was to communicate to the Count de Guines, the French ambassador in London, the intrigues in which he was engaged on behalf of the colonies, the answer, in the King's own hand, written at the end of the question was, "He is to be kept in ignorance" (*il doit ignorer*). Beaumarchais had presented a memorial to the King to persuade him to send secretly, by his (Beaumarchais') agency, arms and munitions of war to the American Colonies. On this point, a document presented personally to the King is very emphatic. "Finally," it says, "I ask, before leaving, a positive answer "to my last memorial" (the one just mentioned). "If there was ever an important question, it must be admitted "that this is one. I answer with my "head, after the most serious reflection, "for the most glorious success of this "operation for my master's whole kingdom, without compromising his person, "his ministers or his interests. Will any "of those who dissuade His Majesty from "it, do the same, or answer for all the evil "which must infallibly happen to France "by its rejection?"

He was not successful at the moment, but consent to the scheme was not long delayed. He succeeded by the fortunate result of secret service in gaining the con-