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*A Merry Tale of a Merry Time*

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by the hostess herself—from her unsuspecting, royal guest. There, Sire, stands the only thief!" She pointed accusingly at Portsmouth.

"My signature!" cried Charles, as he ran his eye down a parchment. "The treaties! No more Parliaments for England. I agreed to that."

"I agree to that myself," said Nell, roguishly. "England's King is too great to need Parliaments. The King should have a confidential adviser, however—not French," and she cast a defiant glance at Portsmouth, "but English. Read on; read on."

She placed her pretty cheek as near as possible to the King's as she followed the letters over his shoulder.

"A note to Bouillon!" he said, perusing the parchments further. "Charles consents to the fall of Luxembourg. I did not sign all this. I see it all: Louis's ambition to rule the world, England's King debased by promises won and royal contracts made with a clever woman—forgery mixed with truth. Sweet Heaven, what have I done!"