

KING---Beware, sir!

DE L---Of what, Sire! I might resign my sword—(*draws his sword.*)

KING---The resignation would be accepted.

DE L---(*throws away scabbard.*) I might also be solicited to resume it.

KING---Be under no alarm on that account.

DE L---Old associations, habitual respect for the sovereign of France, might induce me, neglectful of my wounded honour, to comply.

KING---Your honour shall not be so severely tested.

DE L---Thus, Sire! (*breaks his sword and throws the fragments at the King's feet.*) I place myself beyond temptation.

KING---This indignity to your sovereign. (*lifts his cane, and is about to strike de Lauzun, when de Houdancourt rushes in, and throws herself at the King's feet.*)

DE H---Spare him, Sire! spare yourself this degradation.

KING---My better angel! (*goes to window, opens it, and throws away his cane.*) There! history shall never have it to record, that Louis le Grand struck a nobleman of France.

DE H---(*aside to De L.*) Have you owned your love?

DE L---(*aside.*) Yes! and he insulted me.

KING---(*returning.*) This lady, Monsr. de Lauzun, has rescued us both from humiliation! But the forged letter, Sir.

DE L---I assure your Majesty, upon my honour, that I am ignorant of any letter it would not become a gentleman to write.

KING---What! after our leniency, do you still persist in denying any knowledge of the base epistle?

DE H---Hear me, Sire! De Lauzun knows nothing of the affair, indeed he does not. Accident revealed to me the existence of a foul conspiracy, in which he is neither directly or indirectly implicated.

KING---Your word absolves him. But the conspiracy you allude to! know you the authors of the letter?

DE H---I beseech your Majesty to spare me the pain of a revelation.

KING---Name them, we command you! lest we again confound the innocent with the guilty.

DE H---I dare not disobey. (*hesitating.*) Madame, and—

KING---What! our sister Henrietta?

DE H---And others, whose names I am unacquainted with.

KING---Enough! we have the clue, and will unravel the affair ourselves. Monsr. de Lauzun, the testimony of this noble girl, added to our former regard, induce us to overlook your disrespectful conduct. But there is another circumstance--

(*Folding doors thrown open, a saloon beyond with a table, on which a repast is served; courtiers, ladies, &c., stand grouped around it, servants form a line on either side—ushers advance, &c.*)

USHERS---His Majesty is served.

KING---(*aside.*) Vexatious ceremony.

DE L---(*aside.*) More delay! unfortunate interruption!

DE H---(*to de L.*) Patience! All will yet be well.

KING---We attend! (*Exit preceded by ushers, folding doors close after them. Execut de H and de L. conversing.*)

*Curtain falls.*