

CORX.—Hasten to de Vardes, and caution him.

DE G.—I dare not. (*music without.*)

CORX.—Hark! the courtiers are assembling: we must separate.

DE G.—Let us join them instantly, our absence will be remarked. We are under surveillance, depend upon it. (*Exeunt.*)

*Enter King, Madame, Countess, La Valliere, De Lauzun, De Houdancourt, Maid of Honour, Courtiers, Pages, Mousquetaires, &c.*

KING.—(*going to La Val. and taking her hand.*) Come, fair creature, the chair of state awaits you.

LA VAL.—Sire! I dare not.

KING.—Nay, nay! This entertainment is given in honour of you, and you alone.

LA VAL.—The Duchess d'Orleans claims precedence.

KING.—True, in public ceremonial: But on this, a special occasion, we hail you Queen of the Enchanted Isle.

LA VAL.—Your gracious notice will excite attention!

KING.—Refusal will be more remarkable than acceptance. Come! grant me this favour. (*hands her to chair, &c., and stands beside her.*)

LA VAL.—(*aside.*) He solicits, when he might command.

MAD.—(*aside.*) To see her thus! Oh, degradation! (*Courtiers hasten to pay homage to La Val.*)

CORX.—(*aside.*) They hasten to worship the rising sun.

*Enter Masque of the five nations, Romans, Persians, headed by De Guiche, Turks, Americans, Indians. They perform a martial dance, to music from Lully's operas, during which the King converses with La Valliere observed by Madam and Countess.*

KING.—Charming Louise! The moment—the happy moment—is at length arrived that permits me to do homage to thy matchless perfection.

LA VAL.—Oh, Sire! This unmerited distinction overwhelms me with confusion, yet commands my warmest gratitude.

KING.—Gratitude, my fair enslaver! Oh give the emotions of your gentle bosom some tenderer expression. Renew the avowal which first revealed to my doubting heart, the rapturous truth. Repeat, I pray you, the assurance that mutual love regards nor rank nor station!

LA VAL.—Banish from your mind, I beseech your Majesty, the unguarded expressions of a silly girl.

KING.—Forget them? never! As my ear imbibed, my heart recorded the balmy incense.

LA VAL.—Believe me, Sire! The declaration was involuntary.

KING.—And therefore the more precious—realizing the cherished dream of my existence, and promising un hoped for happiness. But say, can you forgive my apparent estrangement since our last meeting at Fontainebleau, during the chase?

LA VAL.—Forgive *you*, Sire?

KING.—Yes! For daring to question the happiness in store—for disbelieving the evidence of my own senses—for yielding to the promptings of doubt and suspicion.

LA VAL.—See, Sire! her highness is remarking—

MAD.—(*aside.*) He is fascinated past redemption. (*The King continues to converse with great earnestness with La Valliere.*)