

open! I may make some notable discovery. (*Enters Cabinet—closes one door which partially conceals her. Enter Chalais, and other ladies.*)

CHAL.—Not here! where can she be! (*calls*). Madlle Montalais!

LADY.—Probably retired to her chamber.

CHAL.—Dear me! the cabinets are open; how unusual! Let us see what they contain.

LADIES.—Oh yes! let us see. (*They rush up to the cabinets, just as Montalais re-appears—they see her and scream.*) Good gracious! what a fright you gave us.

CHAL.—How can you be so mischievous?

MONT.—(*coming forward flourishing a bunch of Ribbons*). Behold! a trophy.

CHAL.—The King's shoulder knot! I recognise it by the brilliant that confines the bow. Where did you find it?

MONT.—In yonder cabinet.

CHAL.—He must have lost it. What can he have been doing there?

MONT.—A mystery, which we must leave the Countess to solve, and this may afford some clue.

CHAL.—I have it! He came to meet La Valliere! Did you not remark how he noticed her? And how vexed he was whenever her Highness, and the Countess interrupted their conversation?

LADIES.—And intercepted their stolen glances!

MONT.—For my part I cannot conceive what he sees in such a simpleton to be so fascinated.

CHAL.—She is timid, certainly, and reserved; but you must allow that she is beautiful; and moreover, there is a peculiar grace about her—

MONT.—(*sneering*). Oh! ha, ha! very *peculiar*. You sly creature! you have discovered, then—

CHAL.—Discovered!

MONT.—Yes, to be sure! that she is—

LADIES.—Pray tell us! she is what?

MONT.—Positively crooked.

LADIES.—Oh! delightful!

MONT.—Yes! and what is more remarkable—

LADIES.—What! What!

MONT.—She has not even the art to conceal her *peculiar* grace, as Chalais calls it. Then, her *tournaire* altogether—

LADIES.—Awkward, very awkward.

MONT.—And her dress!

LADIES.—Preposterously simple!

CHAL.—Nevertheless, I wager my ruby bracelet, ladies, that ere long she sets us all the fashion.

MONT.—Then she must change her *marchande de modes*?

LADIES.—Or we ours!

MONT.—Hush! I see her coming! let us in: I can't endure her. (*Exeunt*).

*Enter La Valliere.*

LA VAL.—What can you have induced his Majesty to quit the barge so abruptly! Have I offended him! oh no! he smiled tenderly as he took leave of me, and did not notice the other ladies. What fascination in his smile! Is this the man they call a libertine? It cannot be! his whole demeanour, so