

throw themselves at the feet of the queen, tell her their misfortune, and entreat her to make use of her authority and credit with the king to prevent the effects of his anger, and they all unanimously embraced the proposal; but while they were preparing to set out, a page from that princess came for the box, on which they returned for answer, they were bringing it; but they no sooner stood before the queen, than perceiving the box in the hand of the governor's lady, she viewed it with eagerness, snatched it, and in an instant opened the lid, when confused and astonished she burst into a rage against the king, for having sported with a curiosity that had given her the extremest inquietude; when the governor's lady with abundance of tears, acknowledged her fault, and in the name of all the ladies, begged her to endeavour to obtain their pardon. The queen was sensible of their afflictions, and promised to undertake their cause.

In the mean time, the king, who waited for them, was surprised at their delay, and had mentioned it to Bertholde, who imputed it to the success of his stratagem. While they were talking on this subject, the queen entered, accompanied by the ladies, to the number of about 300, when their melancholy and dejected air confirmed the truth of this opinion.

The king, having seated the queen by his side, asked the cause of this visit; You have read, said she, the request I caused to be presented to you yesterday, in the name of all these ladies, and we are come for the answer you promised to give us. It is in this box, answered the king, and at the same time was going to open it. Your majesty may spare yourself the trouble, replied the queen, the bird is flown: The curiosity of these ladies has caused this accident, and you see them all at your majesty's feet to implore your pardon. And indeed the ladies as soon as the king attempted to open it, had prostrated themselves with their faces to the ground.

At these words the king seeming in a violent rage, Is it thus then, said he, in an angry tone; is it thus that you obey me? Have you let the bird fly that I intrusted to your care, in spite of the strict orders I gave you to the contrary; and have you the front after this, to come to me to desire me to admit you into all my councils, and to enter into the affairs of my government and kingdom? How can you keep the secrets that will be there treated of, secrets of the greatest importance, since on those principally depend the happiness or misery of my people, the prosperity or ruin of my kingdom, and the

safety or fall of my throne? How can you resist your inclination to divulge them, when in spite of my prohibitions and threatenings, you have not been able to restrain your curiosity for half a day. Go, foolish as you are you deserve to be punished with the utmost severity: But out of respect for the queen, who has condescended to interest herself in your affairs, I consent to pardon you; but let me, for the time to come, never hear of the like extravagancies. And believe me, it is not without the best and the most solid reasons, that the laws have excluded you from the government.

The king's pleasure at the success of this scheme was not less than the mortification the poor ladies suffered in hearing this discourse; and they were no sooner gone, then he made his acknowledgments to Bertholde. The more I know you, said he, the more I esteem and admire you; as a proof of my satisfaction, receive from my hand this ring, and my treasurer shall give you a thousand crowns. Do not be displeased, replied Bertholde, if I disobey you; my sincerity has already made me too many enemies, for whom however, I do not care a farthing, for he who desires nothing, and has nothing, has nothing to fear. Nature has made me free, and I resolve to keep my freedom as long as my life; but I cannot be free, if I take your presents, for as the proverb says, He who takes, sells himself. How then, replied the king, shall I shew my gratitude? I have heard, said Bertholde, that it is more glorious to deserve the favours of a prince and to refuse them, than to receive without deserving them. If I was capable of vanity, your goodwill would be more agreeable to me than all the presents in the world.

While they were talking in this manner, the king received a letter from the queen, who, resolving to be revenged on the cause of the ladies' disgrace, sent for the unhappy peasant, who by many artifices evaded the force of her resentment. She had four large dogs placed in the court through which he was to pass, in order to tear him to pieces; this he was informed of, and getting a brace of live hares, carried them under his arms, and letting them loose at the approach of the dogs, was instantly delivered from these enemies. He then, to the queen's surprise, appeared before her, was put into a sack, and in this condition confined in a room till the next day, when he was to be thrown into the river; but he had the address to persuade the soldier who was set over him, to let him out and take his place; and then stealing the queen's robe and her veil, in this