

"She was in fortune, wrote Brunetière, what she had been in her days of mediocrity: extremely watchful over herself, and more than ever 'on her guard' against her passions. It might ever have been said that she feared to dissipate her glorious and unforeseen dream, by trying to secure it. No vain honors, no display of her influence, a modest life, an apologetic air, and intertwined with all, even in the glee of her triumph, thoughts of sadness and of death." The very month following her marriage she wrote to her brother: "I do not know how you make out that I wrote you a melancholic letter. I have no reason to be cast down in spirits and certainly no one is less so." She adds this mark-worthy phrase: "I spoke to you about death because I think often of it and believe I can do no better than prepare for it." This gloominess is not confined to her days of favor. Long before that period we find notable traces of it in her "*Correspondance*." "I am weary of life," she wrote. "Would that I could make you see the tediousness that haunts the great and the trouble they have to fill up their days. Do you not see that I am dying of sadness in a fortune utterly beyond my most sanguine dreams?"

These traits of character must be borne in mind while estimating her political rôle. In her correspondence with that other illustrious adventuress, the Princess of the Nesins, who indeed ruled Spain Mme. de Maintenon strenuously denies taking any part in politics. "You do not believe me then, Madame, when I tell you that I have no share in public affairs, and that the rulers would have as much reluctance for communicating them to me, as I have aversion for hearing them." That this language was inspired by policy as a blind to set at naught the prying indiscretion of her correspondent is the impression of M. Geffroy. Brunetière, while admitting that there is exaggeration in the letter quoted, upholds against Geffroy that there is a great deal of truth. And, in fact, had Mme. de Maintenon been immersed in public business, she would not have had leisure for gloom and sadness. Mlle. Aumale corroborates Brunetière's view and gives as reason that the king's jealousy of interference barred her from the political sphere.

It would be preposterous however, to affirm that this legal ostracism was absolute. The king, no doubt, out of courtesy and amiability,