

enquired what chance had brought him there.

Peguilhem, who was sure of his success, imagined he could lay the valet under some obligations, by trusting him with a secret. Nyest seemingly rejoiced at the news, pulled out his watch, and under pretext of dispatching some immediate business of the king's, left him. He mounted, on all four, some dark back stairs, to the apartment where Louvois transacted business, told that minister, who happened not to be of the council of finance, that Peguilhem was on the point of being declared grand master, and that he was now attending below. Louvois hated Peguilhem, who was the friend of Colbert his rival, he was equally afraid of his influence and his airs, thence he obtain a place, which was so closely connected with his own department at war. He embraces Nyest with the most ardent expressions of gratitude, immediately sends him back, lays hold of some dispatches before him, descends, and enters the antichamber, where Peguilhem and Nyest are again in conversation.

Nyest appears surprized at seeing Louvois, and tells him that the council is not yet broke up; 'no matter,' answers Louvois, 'I must enter, my dispatches are pressing ones,'—and opens the door. The king, surprized, rises to meet him, and asks what brought him thither; Louvois draws him towards a window. 'I hear' said he, 'your Majesty is going to declare Peguilhem grand master of artillery; he now attends in the antichamber; you are, sire, the master of your own favours, and your own choice, but you never can reconcile Peguilhem and me; I shall never submit to his caprices and his airs; he will immediately begin to overturn every appointment hitherto made; the artillery is closely connected with the department of war, and your majesty will have nothing to do, but to appease our mutual animosities, to act as perpetual umpire between his caprices and my obstinacy.'

The king, extremely vexed at being told his secret by him, from whom chiefly he had wanted to hide it, answers Louvois with a serious air, that nothing was yet done, dismisses him, and rejoins the council—some moments after it breaks up, the king goes to mass, sees Peguilhem, and passes him without a word.

Peguilhem in amazement attends the remainder of the day, and hearing nothing of the promised declaration, mentions it to the king at his petit coucher. The king replies, that the moment is not yet come, and that he shall see: The ambiguity of his answer, and the dryness of his

tone, alarm Peguilhem; relying on his interest with the women and the jargon of gallantry, he visits Madame de Montespan, tells her his fears, and conjures her to dispel them; the promises wonders and amuses him, for several days. Sick of suspense and unable to guess at the cause of his misfortune, he forms the incredible resolution of acting the spy at a tete-a-tete of the King and Madame de Montespan, by the means of a waiting-woman; by their conversation, he is informed of the obstacles which Louvois threw in his way, of the king's anger at seeing his secret betrayed, of his resolution to refuse him the place, as well to punish him, as to avoid being perpetually harraided by their quarrels; he overheard every word that passed between the king and his mistress, and her, whose good offices he fondly relied on, exerting all her powers of mischief against him.

Madame de Montespan now went to the toilet to prepare herself for the rehearsal of a ballet, at which the king, the queen, and the whole court were to meet; the waiting-woman drew Peguilhem from his hole, who placed himself at the door of Madame de Montespan. She appearing, he offers his hand, and with an air tenderly respectful, asks whether she has condescended to recollect his concerns with the king; she in a pompous manner displays her fictitious services, whilst he with a credulous air, here and there throws in a question the better to ensnare her; them all at once approaching her ear, 'thou art,' says he, 'a liar and a jade, was it not this the king said to you; was it not thus you answered?' Madame de Montespan, thunderstruck and unable to reply a single word, got to the place of rendezvous, all trembling, and unable to hide her agitation, and the moment she entered, fainted, away. The court was already there—the king ran to her terrified, she recovered with difficulty. In the evening he told the king what had happened, and insisted on it that none but the devil could have informed Peguilhem so precisely, in an instant, of all they had communicated to each other about him.

The king was extremely provoked by the bad treatment his mistress had received, and equally anxious to know by what means Peguilhem had obtained such immediate and circumstantial information. Peguilhem, on the other side, was furious at the thought of losing the artillery—to that both lay under the most whimsical constraint with each other—a few days put an end to it; Peguilhem, by his rank, had the liberty of approaching the king, and seizing the opportunity of a tete-a-tete, he mentioned