

four years in this rigorous confinement, and sixty-three years old when he died within the gloomy walls of his dungeon. During this long term of imprisonment the King never relented or showed any mercy towards his captive.

That Louis should oblige him to wear a mask of iron or any other material continually is not to be wondered at, when we consider the outrageous breach of the law of nations that had been perpetrated by the arrest of Matthioli. At the time of his forcible capture this nobleman was actually the plenipotentiary of the Duke of Mantua, and was entrusted with the carrying out of a treaty with the King of France. For the French sovereign to order his seizure and imprisonment was one of the most glaring acts of violence that could be committed, and one which, if discovered, would forever raise distrust in the breasts of other sovereigns, and prevent them from opening up any negotiations whatever, with Louis. This is one of the blackest stains on the character of Louis XIV. Many Frenchmen who are jealously proud of their country, and especially of the glorious reign of Louis, reject with scorn this charge against the lofty-minded King of France, but while we admit with them that the policy of this sovereign was in general, above such disgraceful tricks, and that as a King, he showed some zeal for the cause of religion and much for the material advancement of France, nevertheless, he was not blameless, and facts in this particular incident, apparently prove him guilty of gross inhospitality and injustice.

A French writer, Montesquieu, has said that there are things that everyone says because they have once been said. This is true, and those things are always of an extraordinary and marvellous nature. Such was the saying of Voltaire when he proclaimed to the world that the Man in the Iron Mask was a twin-brother of Louis XIV. This belief has taken

such deep roots in the public mind, that it would be useless to attempt to entirely eradicate it, and it still has innumerable partisans at the present day. It is an opinion altogether devoid of proofs and probability, first insinuated by Voltaire in his "*Siecle de Louis XIV.*," and afterwards developed in his philosophical Dictionary. Here, after describing the different translations of the prisoner under St. Mars as they actually took place, he proceeds to draw from his imagination a very exact resemblance in features, form and voice, between this famous prisoner and the King, and this similarity he brings forward as a proof of their common origin.

In youth, this twin-brother was brought up in complete ignorance of his high rank and station in life. By accident he discovered his parentage, and thenceforth labored to have his rights recognized in the face of the whole world, but foiled at every turn and overpowered, he was finally condemned to wear an Iron Mask and pass the remainder of his life in the most solitary confinement of the French prisons.

Lucas, in his tragedy the "*Man in the Iron Mask*," almost makes us feel the agony suffered by this unfortunate individual during his long imprisonment. On being told that assassins seek his life, the poor prisoner replies:—

"My life! The flame of life has long been extinguished within me. What you behold is not a living man, but a corpse mouldering away in an iron tomb. Formerly this mask compressed and bruised my features; but now my sunken, hollow countenance shrinks from its touch; beneath this cold and motionless image my face has contracted by long suffering. I have tried to pray through the dark, silent nights of thought and anguish, but in vain, the bitterness that amassed itself in my heart found vent only in curses."

But of this prisoner, be he whom he may, we know with certainty that his