

sane mind dare call them intrigue, craft, ambition? Yet such are the very means to which Francoise d'Aubigné owed her introduction to court life.

It happened in this way. Madame de Montespan, then reigning favorite of the king, wanted some one to nurse her children. Not every one could fill this position, for she had, or imagined she had, a reputation to bolster up and maintain. A short acquaintance with Madame de Maintenon sufficed to convince Madame de Montespan that here was a personage to whose discretion she could safely trust her personal reputation, and to whose gentleness and goodwill she could fearlessly confide the rearing and education of her children. Without further ado, our heroine was ushered into the royal household.

The winning of the king's love was equally bereft of intrigue, and here, again, Mme. de Montespan was the real, though unconscious, agency. Endowed with intelligence and mental vigor, but spiteful and shrewish, this concubine had long bored the king. Kings are of the self-same metal as other men and hate hen-pecking. His majesty had a fatherly solicitude for his adulterine progeny, and this sentiment inspired him to bestow a good deal of his idle moments in their company. Familiarity with Madame de Maintenon's good kindly nature bred in the king's heart a strong attachment to her, that rooted itself deeper and deeper from contact with the gusty, stormy moods of his reigning paramour.

This article must not be interpreted as an apology of the life of Madame de Maintenon, or as aiming at setting her up as a pattern for imitation. Much there is in her life that forfeits for her this honor. There is no room to doubt, in the first place, that a scrupulously virtuous person would not have undertaken the rearing of these adulterine children. Her listening to the disloyal love-vows of the king is a real blot on her memory. Nor is she excused by saying that those were carnal days and, consequently, coarse in their codes of honor. The only explanation admissible, that she is, as Brunetière asserted, by no means an extraordinary character.