

transaction. But plead not for the rest, especially for that traitor De Guiche. Retire, Madam! but above all things be present at the fête, be silent, appear as if nothing had happened; or the pardon shall be withheld. (*walks up.*)

MAD.—(*aside and exit.*) Poor De Guiche!

*Enter De Lauzun.*

DE L.—Another night of uncertainty. It will be impossible, before this tinsel pageant, to obtain an audience. (*sees the King.*) Ha! By all that is fortunate—the King!

KING.—(*turns.*) Monsr. De Lauzun!

DE L.—(*kneels.*) At your feet, Sire!

KING.—Rise, De Lauzun, we earnestly desired a conference with you.

DE L.—The desire is mutual, Sire.

KING.—During our painful interview this morning, you alluded to your attachment to a certain lady. We have given the subject our consideration, and have determined—at much sacrifice of feeling—to inform you, that if Madlle De La Valliere—

DE L.—(*interrupting.*) Madlle De La Valliere!

KING.—Yes! Be assured, that if Louise returns your affection—my heart will burst—we will respect her feelings, and sanction your union.

DE L.—My union with La Valliere!

KING.—You love her—do you not?

DE L. I esteem the lady—prize her friendship—

KING.—Pshaw! was it mere esteem that induced you to seek her in the private apartments? was it friendship only that induced her to address a letter to you? Come De Lauzun, be candid.

DE L.—It is true, Sire, that I went thither to meet her; true, also, that she was the bearer of a letter addressed to me.

KING.—Well, sir, what does that prove?

DE L.—That Madlle. De La Valliere is the most estimable of women—the warm friend—the trust-worthy confidante of the lady to whom I am devoted.

KING.—Ha! the bearer—not the writer of the letter?

DE L.—Precisely so, your Majesty.

KING.—De Lauzun, your explanation elevates me from the depths of despair, to the summit of happiness. Singular misconception! How much blindness, how much self-inflicted torture! But it is past. Tell me—if you do not love Louise—who in the name of Cupid do you love?

DE L.—Sire, my aspirations have dared to soar—

KING.—Soar as high as you please, so that Louise be not the object! But, to return to your inamorata, her name? Dont hesitate—any name you please.

DE L.—Sire, the Queen—

KING.—(*Interrupting.*) The Queen! Come, come, De Lauzun, you are soaring indeed. Ha, ha! you must allow us to make exception in favour of our consort!

DE L.—Your Majesty arrives at conclusions somewhat hastily.

KING.—Forgive me—ha, ha! I am so happy! Go on.

DE L.—I was about to observe that her Majesty has long been aware of the attachment between your august kinswoman and myself.

KING.—Kinswoman! which? we have so many.

DE L.—Maddie. De Montpensier, Sire. (*aside.*) 'Tis out at last!

KING.—What! La grande Mademoiselle? Our cousin who fired the