

into which the labor of France poured its earnings ; and it was never full.

Here the graces and charms were a political power. Women had prodigious influence, and the two sexes were never more alike. Men not only dressed in colors, but they wore patches and carried muffs. The robust qualities of the old nobility still lingered among the exiles of the provinces, while at Court they had melted into refinements tainted with corruption. Yet if the butterflies of Versailles had lost virility, they had not lost courage. They fought as gayly as they danced. In the halls which they haunted of yore, turned now into a historical picture-gallery, one sees them still, on the canvas of Lenfant, Lepaon, or Vernet, facing death with careless gallantry, in their small three-cornered hats, powdered perukes, embroidered coats, and lace ruffles. Their valets served them with ice in the trenches, under the cannon of besieged towns. A troop of actors formed part of the army-train of Marshal Saxe. At night there was a comedy, a ballet, or a ball, and in the morning a battle. Saxe, however, himself a sturdy German, while he recognized their fighting value, and knew well how to make the best of it, sometimes complained that they were volatile, excitable, and difficult to manage.

The weight of the Court, with its pomps, luxuries, and wars, bore on the classes least able to support it. The poorest were taxed most ; the richest not at all. The nobles, in the main, were free from imposts. The clergy, who had vast pos-

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