



FIG. 1640.—ANCIENT LABYRINTH IN THE GARDEN AT VERSAILLES.

winding path was flanked on either side with grotesque imitations of animals intended to represent the beasts of Aesop's fables. The gardens of Versailles were extremely formal in character. They still exist, but modern critics who have written disparagingly of them should remember that to form a just idea of their merits they should have been seen when thronged with all the splendid life of the court of the Grand Monarque Louis XIV. They were admirably adapted to the purpose for which they were to be used drawing-rooms for summer days for the gaily clad courtiers and ladies. Ten thousand people lived in the palace, so the lawns could seldom have been deserted. Versailles was entirely the creation of Louis XIV. If he did not "make the desert smile," he at all events through his gardener, Le Notre, turned a pestilent marsh into a superb pleasure ground. He was extremely fond of gardening, and at some periods of the year spent whole days in watching and superintending work in his gardens and his different buildings, and took as much interest in the minute

detail of direction as if he had been a landscape artist or an architect. The cost of the palace and park of Versailles according to Voltaire's estimate, now considered the calculation most nearly approaching the truth, was something like one hundred millions of dollars, and to this must be added the worth of the labor given by the peasants, who were forced under the law of the corvée to toil without any pay. At Versailles and its adjoining parks of Trianon and Marly, there were at one time employed no less than 22,000 men and 6,000 horses.

The making of Versailles was a tragedy. A diary of a French notable contains, under date of 31st May, 1685, the following entry. "There are now more than 36,000 peasants at work in and



FIG. 1641.—LOUIS XIV.—From a rare portrait in the Archives at Ottawa.

about Versailles for the King. The half-starved and half-clad wretches die by dozens under the strain of the cruel tasks imposed on them." In October of 1687, Madame de Sevigné wrote as