

And lately the Count d'Haussonville treading, no doubt, in the steps of M. A. Geffroy and Brunetière, has given to the world under the title "*Souvenirs de Madame de Maintenon*" what, it is hoped, will prove the death-blow of these same calumnies. The Count d'Haussonville's work is the complement of that of M. Geffroy, being made up mainly of the private correspondence of Mlle. Aumale, for fourteen years constant companion and private secretary of Mme. de Maintenon. With the facts furnished by these two publications, let us endeavor to get a true portrait of this notorious lady.

In politics, it scarcely needs stating, men habitually associate great and startling success with double dealing and deceit. Successful politicians are clever wire-pullers. Transporting ourselves then in fancy, to the days of Lewis XIV—an era frequent with political schemers—how would we have unraveled the mystery that, to outsiders, wrapped round Françoise d'Aubigné and her fortune. Would we have solved the problem of her promotion from a common scullion to be wife of the king, hostile court-factions and rivalries notwithstanding, without calling in the unseen agencies of cunning and craft? The people of those days certainly did not; and herein lay the plausibility of La Beaumelle's story. The people were not deceived by his fabrications; they had already deceived themselves in building François d'Aubigné in symmetry with their own conception of her fortune.

The great mistake concerning this lady, Brunetière pointed out in his article, is that she has been pictured far more extraordinary than facts will warrant; her virtues have been exalted, her vices exaggerated.

Taking her own account of her life before her accession to court favor we are astonished at its even tenor and rural simplicity. Living by turns at Mme. d'Heudicourt's and at Mme. de Montcheuvreuil, she employed herself at the most commonplace tasks. The first to rise in the morning, she busied herself with the house, swept, dusted, ran on errands, washed, swaddled the babies and put them to bed, "as worn out at the end of the day and as slovenly as any hired girl." Far from me the pretension of making little of these traits of character. Will any