



MARIA THERESA OF AUSTRIA, MOTHER OF MARIE-ANTOINETTE.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE AS DAUPHINE.¹

BY THE AUTHOR OF «LIFE IN THE TUILERIES UNDER THE SECOND EMPIRE.»

THE real Marie-Antoinette has not yet been fully depicted. Recent publications of undoubted authenticity² throw a new light on the true character of one who was neither a saint nor yet a sinner in any grave degree, but an amiable and lovable woman, frivolous in her prosperous days, engrossed in the pursuit of amusement, thoughtless and imprudent in many of her actions and words, but who, nevertheless, in the time of adversity showed that she had inherited the heroic spirit of her mother.

Maria Theresa was a great sovereign, a woman of masculine mind; and although the mother of sixteen children, she remained essentially a politician—a *statesman*, if such an expression may be used. Her daughters were regarded principally as instruments for obtaining political alliances. The youngest and fairest she had destined from her earliest years for the heir to the throne of France.

Marie-Antoinette-Josèphe-Jeanne, of Hapsburg-Lorraine, Archduchess of Austria and future Queen of France, was born on November 2 (feast of All Souls), 1755—the day after the terrible catastrophe at Lisbon, when that city was nearly destroyed by an earthquake. Maria Theresa's daughter was

taught the correct pronounciation of French by two actors of the Théâtre Français, while the French Abbé de Vermond was appointed to direct her education, which, however, was unhappily very incomplete. The writers who glorify the maternal care and vigilance of Maria Theresa are contradicted by the most trustworthy witnesses, the truth seeming to be that the great Empress, engrossed by her political cares, left her children far too completely to the discretion of governesses and subordinates, who were neither very capable nor, perhaps, very conscientious. Drawings were shown to the Empress as the work of Marie-Antoinette which the latter afterward declared she had never touched, and this «make-believe» system seems to have been carried on throughout. The Abbé de Vermond directed only her French studies; but although a good and well-meaning man, the results which he obtained were far from creditable to his efforts. He does not seem to have had the art either of interesting her in any serious pursuit, or of acquiring proper control over her mind and character. Her handwriting even, as proved by autographs, was utterly unformed and childish at the time of her arrival at the court of France, and her spelling was defective.

Through the manœuvres of her imperial mother, and the influence of the Duc de Choiseul, then prime minister of France, who favored the Austrian alliance, the mar-

¹ Readers of this article may be interested to know that the next number of THE CENTURY will contain another paper by the same writer entitled «The Last Days of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette.»—EDITOR.

² Taken from the State Papers at Vienna.

riage was settled at the earliest possible age of the Dauphin and of the Archduchess, the bride being only fourteen, and the bridegroom a year older.

On January 21, 1770, Marie-Antoinette received the wedding-ring sent by the Dauphin—the very day, twenty-three years later, on which Louis XVI ascended the scaffold! On April 16 the official demand was made to the widowed Empress, in the name of the «most Christian King,» by the Marquis de Durfort. On the 17th the Archduchess solemnly renounced her rights in Austria. On the 19th a ceremony of marriage by proxy was performed (the Archduke Maximilian representing the Dauphin of France), and the official signatures were then appended to the imperial register of births, deaths, and marriages. The young Princess was then required to spend three days in meditation and prayer, as a preparation for her future state. On April 21, after receiving the holy communion, she was taken to pray before the tombs of her ancestors, where lay the father who had loved her with peculiar affection, and whom she had lost in her early childhood. Then came the final parting from her mother, the last meeting in this world; for in those days few people traveled, and sovereigns never left their states.

Before the last heartrending embrace, Maria Theresa gave her daughter a plan and rule of life «to be read over every month.» Part of this seems to be the «cut-and-dried» advice taken from a devotional book; but here and there, more particularly in a private supplement of instructions, the eager, earnest tones, evidently of the Empress herself, are in marked contrast with the rest:

«Have no curiosity—this is a point on which I have great fears for you. Avoid all familiarity with your subordinates. Ask Monsieur and Madame de Noailles,¹ and even insist, that they shall tell you what you ought to do; and request that they shall warn you sincerely of anything to be corrected in your manner or your speech, or in any other respect. Do not be ashamed of asking advice, and do nothing out of your own head. At the beginning of every month I will despatch a special messenger to Paris; meanwhile you can prepare your letters so as to send them immediately on the arrival of this messenger. Mercy² will have orders for his return. You can also write to me by post, but only on unimportant matters such as every one may know. Destroy my letters, which will enable

¹ They were appointed to conduct the Dauphine to Versailles.

me to write to you more openly; I will do the same as regards yours. Say nothing about domestic affairs here; there is nothing but what would be uninteresting and even wearisome. Speak of your family with truth and moderation.»

Elsewhere she says very sagely: «I should in no wise be desirous of your introducing any novelties or doing anything contrary to the custom of France; you must pretend to nothing peculiar to yourself, nor quote what is done here, nor try that such should be imitated.»

This judicious advice might be followed with advantage by many young brides even in private life; but the state of the court of France at that time was such as to render the future position of the innocent but thoughtless and imperfectly educated young Princess one of peculiar difficulty and peril.

The King, worn out physically and mentally by the excesses of his life, was bearing the yoke of his favorite, the Comtesse du Barry, who reigned supreme. The first Dauphin had died several years before, to the great grief of the nation, for his principles were in strong contrast to those of his father. His wife, the Dauphine, an exceedingly estimable woman strongly attached to her husband, did not long survive him. They left five children: three sons—the Duc de Berry, who after his father's death became Dauphin and heir apparent to the throne of France (afterward king as Louis XVI), the Comte de Provence, and the Comte d'Artois (later known respectively as Louis XVIII and Charles X); and two daughters—Madame Clotilde and Madame Elisabeth.

The Queen, Marie Leczinska, had died some time before the marriage of the Dauphin, her grandson; and since her death the position of «first lady in the land» had been held by her daughter, Madame Adelaïde, a clever woman of an imperious, domineering temper, who was by no means pleased to yield her prerogatives, as she must needs do, to the child-wife of a boyish nephew. Madame Victoire, fat, sleepy, and good-natured, cared little for anything beyond a good dinner and her other comforts, but was led and governed by her elder sister; Madame Sophie was singularly ill-favored, very shy, very disagreeable, and utterly insignificant; the youngest and most amiable of the four sisters, Madame Louise, had recently left the court for a Carmelite convent.

Maria Theresa had a strong desire to give

² The ambassador of the German Empire at the court of France.



Mme. Adelaide.

suitable guidance to her daughter. She consequently arranged with the German ambassador, Comte de Mercy-Argenteau, a secret correspondence, by which she was to be told of everything concerning the young Dauphine. Mercy kept a journal, which was regularly sent to the Empress, in which the most minute details of the daily life of the Princess are jotted down; every act, every incautious word, is registered. Being in utter ignorance of this agreement, Marie-Antoinette treated Mercy with full confidence, often expressing astonishment at the information possessed by the Empress concerning her, but never dreaming that Mercy, whom she entirely trusted, was in fact an accredited spy through whom everything was revealed.

There is, it must be owned, something revolting in the part played by Mercy. True, the revelations were made only to her mother; but she was Empress of Germany, and while Marie-Antoinette ought henceforward to have been devoted to the interests of France, the country over which her husband was to reign, the one idea of Maria Theresa was the prosperity and welfare of her own empire.

On May 6, 1770, after having, in those days of slow traveling, left Vienna on the 21st of April, Marie-Antoinette reached the last German town before Kehl, and the bridge over the Rhine. A pavilion had been erected on the island in the middle of the river, where she was to be solemnly given to the French envoys, and where she was to meet her French household.

The three envoys of the French king stood in the central division as the door opened on the Austrian side and the Archduchess appeared. She advanced toward a platform in the center of the room while the formal surrender to the French was read over; her Austrian attendants then kissed her hand, and disappeared into the Austrian division, closing the door of separation. The Princess was then taken into a room on the French side, where she was undressed and clothed from head to foot in French attire, according to custom on such occasions. When ready, the door was thrown open, and the Princess appeared in full dress, as "Dauphine." Her French household was then formally presented to her; when, gracefully running to the Comtesse de Noailles, her *dame d'honneur*, or first lady, the young Princess embraced her, with the earnest request that she would be her guide and counsel in the performance of the new duties which awaited her.

On the French bank of the Rhine one of the sixty traveling-carriages sent to meet her took the Princess to Strasburg; but meanwhile a storm, which had grown more and more dark and lowering during the ceremony, burst over the city, and terrific peals of thunder mingled with the cheers of the crowd as Marie-Antoinette passed through the gates—a dreary entry into her future kingdom! After a short rest, the Princess continued her journey, finding in every town an enthusiastic reception.

On the 14th of May she reached Compiègne, where, at some distance from the town, she met the Duc de Choiseul, whom she welcomed as a friend. A few minutes later, as she crossed the forest of Compiègne, the King and the Dauphin, with a numerous escort, were seen coming out to meet her. Marie-Antoinette stepped from her carriage, and, running toward the King, threw herself on her knees, whereupon he raised and embraced her. The Dauphin, overpowered with shyness, hardly dared to look at his bride, but ventured to "salute her on the cheek."

The next day the whole court left Compiègne for Versailles, stopping at St. Denis, where Marie-Antoinette, to the great delight of the nuns, wished to see her new aunt, Madame Louise, then a novice at the Carmelite convent. She spent the night at the small château of La Muette, where the King presented her with a pearl necklace that had been brought to France by Anne of Austria, and worn by the queens and dauphines of France, in which each pearl was the size of a hazel-nut and all were exactly of the same water.

On May 16, 1770, at ten o'clock in the morning, Marie-Antoinette made her official entry into that celebrated palace of Versailles which became her home till the outbreak of the French Revolution. The definitive marriage ceremony took place that morning in the chapel of Versailles, and was followed by great rejoicings. The youth of the bride, her childish grace, impressed every one favorably, and even the hostile "Mesdames de France," daughters of the King, were propitiated. She was so young, so pretty, so ingenuous, so caressing, that the imperious Madame Adelaide at once concluded that she would be easily directed in all things. The King told Mercy that he found the young Dauphine lively, but "rather childish"; adding, however, "But that is only natural at her age." The heavy, shy Dauphin was not demonstrative; still he admitted that he liked her face and conversa-



AFTER A PHOTOGRAPH BY BRAUN, CLEMENT & CO., N. Y., OF A PAINTING.



THE PALACE AND PARK OF VERSAILLES.

tion, that she was very agreeable, and that he was altogether well pleased.

The memoirs of the time all dwell upon the promise of her yet undeveloped beauty: the noble cast of her features, her brilliant complexion, the golden shade of her beautiful hair, her graceful manner, and the remarkable dignity of her attitude. She spoke French well, with a slight German accent and some German idioms; but she was so young and so completely surrounded by French attendants that these traces of her foreign origin soon disappeared.

On the first arrival of Marie-Antoinette at Versailles, the traditional apartments of the queens of France were not ready to receive her, and for the first six months she resided in temporary rooms on the ground floor of the palace. After this period she removed to the first floor, where a suite of splendid rooms opening out of the *Galerie des Glaces*, or Hall of Mirrors, was devoted to her use.

Madame de Noailles, having been dame d'honneur to the late Queen, was naturally appointed to the same post in the household of the young Dauphine. Unfortunately the habits acquired while attending a very precise and aged princess rendered her particularly unfitted to direct a wilful, merry

girl of fourteen, whom she annoyed incessantly by remonstrating on some unconscious breach of etiquette. Madame de Noailles was essentially the court lady, stiff and formal, entirely absorbed by the rules of her position, and looking upon the smallest breach of custom as little less than a sin. The Princess was respectfully chided for having forgotten this or that detail of etiquette, or told that her smiles and bows had not been properly distributed according to rank, till the young Dauphine, who had a keen sense of the ridiculous, became both exasperated and diverted by the constant anxiety of her dame d'honneur. Madame de Noailles seemed to be perpetually in the agonized state attributed to some old lord-in-waiting at one of Queen Victoria's first drawing-rooms, when, seeing the Queen make a move toward a lady presented, he cried aloud in great alarm, "Don't kiss her, ma'am! She is not a peeress!"

Marie-Antoinette had been ill prepared by the simplicity of the court of Vienna for such minute observances. The Empress was so revered by the people, the imperial family was so loved, that it was not necessary to awaken respect by so many of the proverbial "externals." On the other hand, the intense haughtiness which lay behind prevented any close contact with that half-nobility which

had pushed its way into the precincts of the court of France.

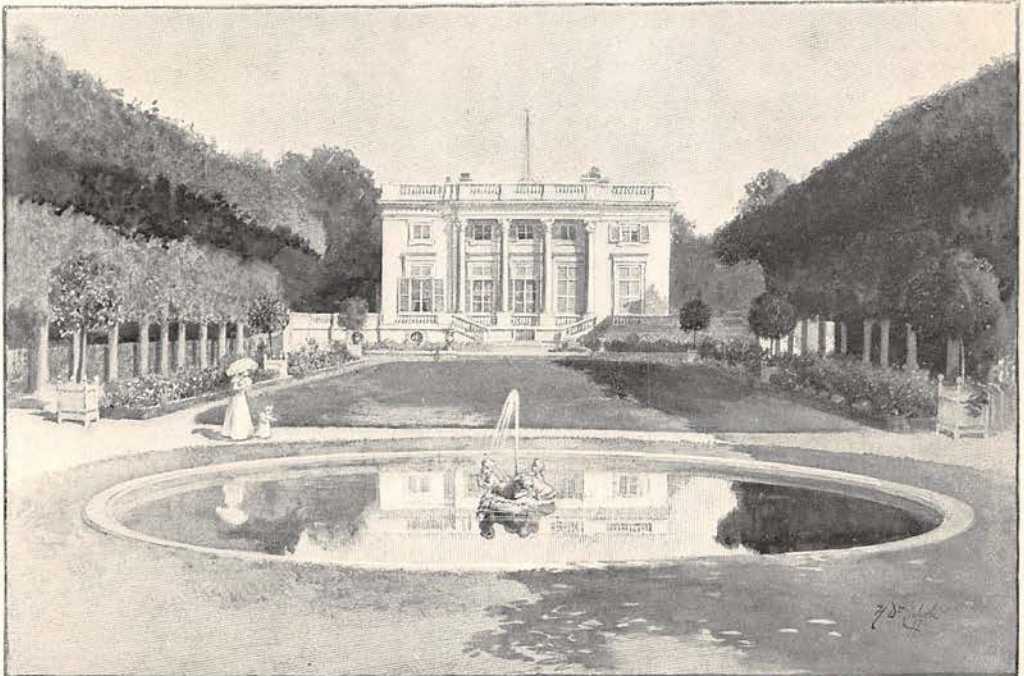
On June 8, three weeks after the arrival of the young Princess, Mercy went to the palace to deliver into her hands a letter from her mother, the Empress, full of good advice. «The only real happiness in this world,» she wrote, «is that which comes of a happy marriage. I can speak from experience. All depends on the wife, if she be obliging, amiable, and *amusing*.» Again the Empress warns her against familiarity, well knowing her good-natured, easy temper; also against the demands which would assail her from those wishing to use her influence in their favor—an error into which Marie-Antoinette, forgetting her mother's warnings, often fell at a later period.

Mercy reached the palace during the usual card-playing; but as soon as the Dauphine saw him she called him to her, saying that she wished to speak to him. He urged her to finish the game, but as soon as possible she rose. «Seeing that I had a paper in my hand,» says Mercy, «she at once understood that it was a letter from your Majesty, and seized it with great eagerness, exclaiming, (Gott sei Dank!) showing much joy at receiving this letter, which she read immediately.»

But troubles were already gathering round Marie-Antoinette, and her wise mother not

being within reach, she was anxious to consult Mercy as to what she ought to do. It was indeed necessary for the poor child to have a friend near her, for she was surrounded by opponents, not the least important of whom was the Duc de la Vauguyon, state tutor, or, as it was termed, «governor,» of the Dauphin. In this instance there was no personal animosity, but only excessive jealousy of any influence which might counterbalance his own over the docile but apathetic and obtuse Dauphin. He knew that the pretty young wife was too childish to be feared, but those about her might make her their instrument, and he particularly disliked and dreaded the Abbé de Vermond. The difficulty which Marie-Antoinette wished to lay before her adviser reveals the extraordinary disorder which prevailed in the court; for she informed Mercy that the persons who now held posts in her household, and who previously were employed in other ways, had not been paid their salaries for six months, and that Madame de Noailles urged her to interfere by speaking herself to the Contrôleur-Général. What was she to do?

Mercy approved, but had no time to say more, as supper was served. When he went out the Comtesse de Noailles summoned him to her apartments, and there he learned that



DRAWN BY H. D. NICHOLS.

PETIT TRIANON, VERSAILLES.

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH.

the Duc de la Vauguion was trying to get rid of the Abbé de Vermond on the ground that his office of reader was a mere sinecure, and that he was useless and out of place at court. Mercy exerted all the influence that he could command to smooth over difficulties and pacify quarrels, interfering successfully with the King to prevent the dismissal of the Abbé de Vermond.

The cloud had blown over, but Mercy took advantage of the threatened storm to work

she promised to resume regular occupation under his direction. She had just reached the age when emancipation from school-room tasks is most earnestly desired, although she was still so childish that Mercy complains of her hoidenish ways, her fondness for romping with the young children of her attendants, and the consequent disorder of her dress. He notes also what were always marked characteristics of Marie-Antoinette—a strong sense of the ridiculous, and con-



DRAWN BY H. D. NICHOLS.

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH.

HOUSE OF THE SEIGNEUR, PETIT TRIANON.

upon the good feelings of Marie-Antoinette by telling her that the Abbé could not, in justice to himself, retain his position unless the Princess accepted his services. The good Abbé had never known how to interest his pupil in her studies or readings, and certainly seems to have been something of what is familiarly called a bore; but affectionate and warm-hearted as was Marie-Antoinette, she could not bear to be the cause of the departure of an old and tried friend. Consequently, though with evident reluctance,

siderable pungency in the manner of calling attention to anything of the kind which caught her fancy.

In this, as in many other respects, Madame de Noailles ought to have exercised a wise and restraining influence; but she incessantly tormented the wilful young Princess, who, wearied and impatient, finally gave her the nickname of «Madame l'Etiquette.»

Two months after her arrival at Versailles, Marie-Antoinette relates the particulars of her daily life, in a letter to her mother:



DRAWN BY H. D. NICHOLS.

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH.

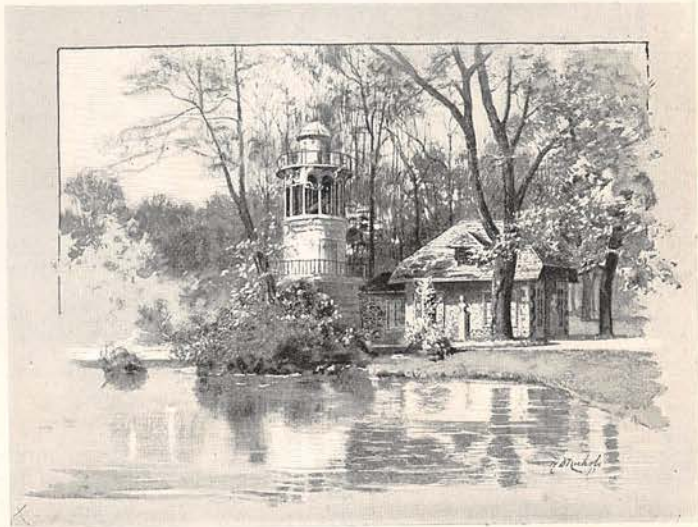
THE TEMPLE OF LOVE, VERSAILLES.

«CHOISY,¹ 12th July.

«MADAME MY VERY DEAR MOTHER: I cannot express how much I am affected by your Majesty's kindness, and I protest that I have not yet received one of your dear letters without tears of regret filling my eyes at being parted from such a kind and tender mother; and although I am very happy here, I should earnestly wish to return to see my dear, very dear family, if only for a short time.

«We have been here since yesterday, and from one o'clock in the afternoon, when we dine, till one in the morning, we cannot return to our own apartments, which is very disagreeable to me. After dinner we have cards till six o'clock; then we go to the play till half-past nine; then supper; then cards again till one o'clock, sometimes even half-past one; only yesterday the King, seeing that I was tired out, kindly dismissed me at eleven, to my very great satisfaction, and I slept very well till half-past ten.

«Your Majesty is very kind to show so much interest in me, even to the extent of wishing for an account of how I spend my time habitually.² I will say, therefore, that I rise at ten o'clock, or nine, or half-past nine, and after dressing I say my prayers; then I breakfast, after which I go to my aunts',³ where I usually meet the King. This lasts till half-past ten. At eleven I go to have my hair dressed. At noon the (Chambre) is called, and any one of sufficient rank may come in. I put on my rouge⁴ and wash my hands before everybody; then the gentlemen go out; the ladies stay, and I dress before them. At twelve is mass; when the King is at Versailles I go to mass with him and my husband and my aunts; if he is not there I go with Monsieur the Dauphin, but always at the same hour. After mass we dine together before everybody,⁵ but it is over by half-past one, as we both eat quickly. I then go to Monsieur the Dauphin; if he is busy, I return to my own apartments, where I read, I write, or I work: for I am embroidering a vest for the King, which does not get on quickly; but I trust that, with God's help, it will be finished in a few years [!]. At three I go to my aunts', where the King usually comes at that time. At four the Abbé comes to me; at five the master for the harpsichord, or the singing-master, till six. At half-past six I generally go to my aunts'



DRAWN BY H. D. NICHOLS.

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH.

THE DAIRY AND TOWER OF MARLBOROUGH, VERSAILLES.

¹ One of the royal residences, destroyed during the Revolution.

² At Versailles.

³ The «Mesdames.»

⁴ Rouge was then a recognized part of court dress.

⁵ Any well-dressed people were admitted to see the dinners of the royal family, which they witnessed separated from them by a railing only. Marie-Antoinette greatly disliked the custom.

when I do not go out. You must know that my husband almost always comes with me to my aunts'. At seven, card-playing till nine; but when the weather is fine I go out, and then the card-playing takes place in

«I entreat you, my very dear mother, to forgive me if my letter is too long; but my greatest pleasure is to be thus in communication with your Majesty. I ask pardon also for the blotted letter, but I have had to write



AFTER A PHOTOGRAPH BY BRAUN, CLEMENT & CO., N. Y. OF THE PAINTING BY M^{LE}. BRESSON.

DUC DE LA VAUGUYON.

my aunts' apartments instead of mine. At nine, supper; when the King is absent my aunts come to take supper with us; if the King is there, we go to them after supper, and we wait for the King, who comes usually at a quarter before eleven; but I lie on a large sofa and sleep till his arrival; when he is not expected we go to bed at eleven. Such is my day.

two days running at my toilet, having no other time at my disposal; and if I do not answer all questions exactly, I trust that your Majesty will make allowances for my having too obediently burned your letter. I must finish this, as I have to dress and go to the King's mass. I have the honor to be your Majesty's most submissive daughter,

«MARIE-ANTOINETTE.»

After reading this graphic account of the frivolous obligations inseparable from the court life of the period, can any one be surprised that a girl not yet fifteen was carried away by the current of the stream, and felt no inclination for a more useful or more serious life? It was so easy and natural to plead impossibility; all the princesses she saw lived in the same manner, and did little but courtesy to the King at stated hours, and put on and off their cumbrous court dresses.¹ Why should she alone be expected to employ her time usefully and cultivate her mind?

In her letters to Mercy, the Empress complains bitterly of her daughter's handwriting and spelling, and again and again urges the necessity of taking up her education seriously. But it was very late to begin regular studies.

In answer to an indignant letter from Maria Theresa, Mercy states that he spoke to the Abbé de Vermond, who acknowledged deficiencies, but maintained that the Dauphine never wrote so badly as when addressing her mother; the reason being that she did not consider what she wrote to be safe, and consequently delayed till the special messenger was about to leave, writing then in such haste that her letters were full of "inaccuracies due to precipitation." Whether with just cause or not, the Dauphine considered no papers safe in her apartments; she feared the use of false keys, or that her own would be taken from her pockets at night. Her fears were carried to such an extent that she actually took her mother's letters to bed with her, as the only means of keeping them secure till the next day.

That the caution of Marie-Antoinette was not entirely unfounded is proved from the fact that the Duc de la Vauguon was actually caught listening at the door of the room where the Dauphine was conversing privately with her husband. Marie-Antoinette, in a letter to her mother, relates this disgraceful act, saying: "A servant, who was either very honest or very stupid, threw the door open, and there was the Duke standing bolt upright, without being able to get away. I remarked to my husband how very objectionable it was for people to listen at doors, and he took it very well."

As yet there was only childish friendship between the boyish Prince and his young wife; he was amused at her playful ways, and good-naturedly submitted to all her wishes, even to the prohibition of his favor-

ite dainties, which disagreed with him, and which she ordered to be removed from the dinner-table without allowing him to partake of them. As he possessed the enormous appetite which characterized the Bourbons, this must have been a trial of temper for the young husband.

Meanwhile the Duc de la Vauguon was not inactive, and did not scruple to put forward Madame du Barry as a means of keeping his influence over the Dauphin. The latter had boyishly expressed a wish to join the King's private hunting and shooting parties. Madame du Barry, to whom this was made known, immediately informed the King, who gave the required permission. The consequence was that the Dauphin, a boy of fifteen, was thus authorized not only to join the sport, but also to attend the suppers with the favorite which followed at the King's shooting-box, called Saint-Hubert, where, as Mercy solemnly states, "the rules of propriety are not always scrupulously observed."

The "Mesdames," not unnaturally, were much alarmed at this emancipation of the young Prince, and at once determined to acquaint him with the real position of Madame du Barry and all the mischief that she had already caused. The Dauphin was much shocked; his honest nature at once revolted, and from that time he treated Madame du Barry with marked aversion. To his young wife he showed increased affection and confidence, entirely agreeing with her feelings as to the Duc de la Vauguon, and expressing his own with regard to Madame du Barry, though not without his usual caution.

In vain Maria Theresa writes to her daughter: "Keep a neutral position in everything. . . . I desire you to be more reserved than ever as regards what is going on; listen to no secrets, and have no curiosity. I am sorry to be obliged to say, *confide nothing*—even to your aunts, whom I esteem so much. I have my reasons for saying this." But the open-hearted nature of Marie-Antoinette often prevented the prudence which her wise mother so earnestly inculcated.

The young Dauphine had a great wish to ride on horseback, which, in modern days, would give rise to no objections; but Mercy, foreseeing the disapprobation of the Empress, applied to the King, through the Duc de Choiseul, pleading the youth of the Princess and the probable want of moderation that she would show in the practice of "such violent exercise." The King satisfied them by refusing his consent to the use of horses, but

¹ The state dress of the Dauphine, mother of Louis XVI, weighed sixty-five pounds.



AFTER A PHOTOGRAPH BY BRAUN, CLEMENT & CO., N. Y., OF THE PAINTING BY JEAN-MARC NATTIER.

allowed donkeys. Some exceedingly quiet animals were chosen, and the Dauphine rode with her ladies in the forest, Mercy gravely assuring the Empress that «these animals are not at all dangerous.»

Nevertheless, Marie-Antoinette managed to slip from her saddle and have a harmless fall. Her ladies, much alarmed, flew to her assistance. She sat on the ground, suppressing a strong inclination to laugh, but would not be raised till they had ascertained «what was the etiquette to be observed when a dauphine of France fell from a donkey.»

History does not enlighten us as to the rules observed on this momentous occasion, or the decision of «Madame l'Etiquette.»

The Dauphine continued to ride her donkeys, but with an ever-increasing desire for real equestrian exercise, notwithstanding the strong objections of her mother, who wrote that she would spoil her complexion and her figure, besides many other evils. Still the wilful young Princess longed more and more for a horse instead of the humble substitute.

Madame Adelaide—whether from a good-natured wish to satisfy her, or from a more

treacherous motive, does not seem clear—suggested that she might set out for one of her donkey excursions, sending beforehand an equerry with a horse, and that at a stated place she might meet the horse and dismiss the donkey. The Dauphine, though strongly tempted, pleaded the fear of displeasing her mother, also that the King might refuse his permission; but Madame Adelaide overruled all scruples, and finally the Dauphine consented. At the appointed place the horse met her, and the young Princess rode with great delight and no danger, an equerry holding the bridle, and several attendants walking by her side. Marie-Antoinette enjoyed her ride, and not less the prospect of seeing «how Mercy would look,» as she told the Duchesse de Chaulnes, who, of course, immediately repeated the childish jest to Mercy. The latter delayed attending her evening circle for a day or two, although he had letters from the Empress to deliver; but finally he made an ominously solemn entrance into the presence of the young Dauphine, who at once called him to her, asking if he knew that she had «ridden a horse.» Mercy bowed low, and gravely answered, «Oui.» The Dauphine then rejoined, with evident nervousness: «I was in great haste to tell you, but I did not see you, although every one immediately congratulated me on what had given me so much pleasure.»

Still solemn, Mercy replied that he should be much mortified if she supposed that he could join those who complimented her; that as he had real zeal and respect for what concerned her, he could only be grieved at what he thought injurious and likely to displease the Empress.

At this the poor girl's countenance changed, and, exceedingly frightened, she said earnestly, with childlike simplicity: «You would throw me into despair if you said that I could grieve the Empress; I assure you that I am in great anxiety,» then eagerly bringing forward as her justification the King's consent and her wish to please the Dauphin by sharing his favorite exercise. Mercy made no reply, but solemnly delivered the letters, and retired, leaving poor Marie-Antoinette more frightened than ever. The whole, according to modern appreciation, would seem to be a case of «much ado about nothing.»

The next day the Princess sent for Mercy, and entreated him to take her part and to justify her in the sight of her mother, the Empress, which he consented to do, provided she would promise not to follow hunts

on horseback or to gallop. Mercy, in fact, warned Maria Theresa that as the King had consented, and the Dauphin had approved, it would be impossible to prevent Marie-Antoinette from continuing to indulge in exercise on horseback, and that the fruitless attempt might have injurious consequences with regard to the moral authority of the Empress over her daughter. Maria Theresa answered that she knew her daughter sufficiently well to be quite convinced that nothing would prevent her from doing anything that she strongly wished to do; but that, nevertheless, she would write to her.

Marie-Antoinette waited with great anxiety for her mother's answer with regard to equestrian exercise, and eagerly asked Mercy if he had «good news» to give her. The letter of Maria Theresa, although hardly satisfactory, sufficed as a half authorization, of which she took advantage heartily. «You say that the King approves, also the Dauphin; they must dispose of all concerning you. I have given them my pretty Antoinette.» But the Empress dwells at length on all the evils which may result from this concession, and concludes: «Now that I have laid all this before you, I shall say no more, and shall try not to think about it.»

Marie-Antoinette had carried her point, and this was all for which she really cared. Notwithstanding her childish wilfulness, her nature was so bright and amiable that it was easy for her to win general popularity; but in what concerned the King her life was a perpetual struggle with court cabals, which created incessant difficulties.

Still, the pretty and winning Dauphine managed playfully to keep in favor with «papa,» as she called the King. The Dauphin, heavy and almost stupid as he seemed, was more and more captivated by his young wife, submitting to be scolded by her for his uncivilized ways, and ever ready to further her wishes, even when contrary to his own. He hated dancing, but as she liked it he arranged to have a ball every Monday in the private apartments of the young couple, but without ceremony, the ladies wearing white dominoes, the gentlemen their ordinary court dress. These balls were highly approved by Maria Theresa as «a great advantage to the Dauphin,» whose somewhat boorish manners really considerably improved, while he retained, nevertheless, the good-natured simplicity which had always characterized him. Madame de Noailles having given a ball in her own private apartments, the Dauphin took his young wife on



AFTER A PHOTOGRAPH BY BRAUN, CLEMENT & CO. N. Y. OF THE PAINTING BY JEAN-MARC NATTIER.

his arm and walked in unexpectedly, saying graciously to the hostess: «I hope, madame, that you will admit both husband and wife. We come not to inconvenience you in any way, but only to share your amusements.» This condescension was highly appreciated by all present, and the Dauphine was credited with having civilized the young Prince.

The minute difficulties and inconveniences which beset the Princess in her daily life would hardly be believed but for the testimony of competent witnesses. Mercy states in a letter to Maria Theresa: «I must call attention to the fact that the Dauphine, whose purse is nominally of six thousand livres¹ a month, has in reality not a single crown at her disposal. There are scandalous abuses here as regards money matters. The

¹ The livre was rather more than the modern franc.

Dauphine's purse is given into the care of her treasurer, who keeps back two thousand five hundred livres every month for pensions granted by the late Queen, and which have fallen on the Dauphine without her knowing anything about them. Her *garçons de chambre* receive one hundred louis a month for the Dauphine's card-playing. Whether she wins or loses, no one sees anything more of this money. The bedchamber women take charge of all the remainder, which is usually distributed in gifts suggested by Madame de Noailles, with the forced consent of the Dauphine, who thus keeps no money at her own disposal. She is certainly not well dressed, but that is the fault of the lady who has the charge of her wardrobe. This lady pays little attention to it, and has not much taste.»

The Dauphine was allowed a sum of 120,000 livres for her dress alone; but she never interfered in any way, and everything was decided, without consulting her, by the *dame d'atour*, who ordered what was necessary according to her own appreciation, and settled the bills of the tradesmen. At the end of the year she presented incomprehensible accounts, which the Dauphine was required to approve, with the result that her expenses greatly exceeded the allotted sum, through no fault of hers. Mercy was called to the rescue, and discovered the most absurd extravagance. For instance, three ells of ribbon, to tie the powdering-gown of the Dauphine, were put down daily; also several ells of silk (daily!) to cover the basket in which her gloves and fan were deposited, with many other items of the same kind, noted by Mercy in solemn reprobation. With all this waste, the arrangements about her were strangely deficient in comfort.

The Dauphine followed the King's hunting-parties two or three times a week, and in her ready good nature she desired cold meats and refreshments to be taken in her carriage, which she herself distributed among the courtiers as a collation. The natural consequence was that all the young men crowded about her, with the result of too much freedom and buoyancy of spirits on all sides, which greatly displeased the King. The kindness of Marie-Antoinette, which often led her into difficulties, was not deficient on more serious occasions, and no accident or injury to any of her servants ever failed to awaken her warmest sympathy, which was shown in the most efficacious manner.

Her mother's severe letters, the troublesome interference of Mercy, the exhortations of the Abbé de Vermond, never ruffled her sweet temper or provoked a word of rebellion. «I admire every day her gentleness and docility,» says the Abbé de Vermond. «She allows me, in the presence of her *dame d'honneur* and her bedchamber women, to express truths which, though respectfully worded, are firm, and stronger than what I used to say to her at Vienna in her private room. I know that I owe her confidence to the approbation of the Empress; but is it not remarkable that it should be persistent, and that the Dauphine should have the moral courage to keep near her a troublesome monitor in the midst of so much flattery and adulation?»

But although always gentle and submissive, there was one point in which no satisfactory result could be obtained—that of

regular occupation. She was full of good resolutions, sincerely promised amendment, and with much self-reproach—went on as before! She romped with children; she played with dogs; she laughed and chatted with «my aunts»; she followed hunts even on horseback, notwithstanding her word pledged to her mother; she danced; and so her life passed despite her dread of «mama's» scrutinizing letters.

The attention of the wise mother became, however, engrossed by a more serious matter. The fall of Choiseul was not only of the greatest importance to Maria Theresa, by withdrawing from the French government her most valuable friend, but it was also an event which gained greater magnitude as a criterion of the influence to be attributed to Madame du Barry. Choiseul had always treated the favorite with the contempt that she deserved, and the ladies of his family had spoken of her in unsparing terms. Consequently she hated the whole family, and was determined to remove their obnoxious presence from Versailles, leaving nothing untried to reach this end. She playfully but incessantly teased the King, winding up her arguments by tossing oranges as she laughingly repeated, «Jump, Choiseul! Jump, Praslin!»¹ Meanwhile her supporters importuned the King more seriously, calling his attention to the supposed danger of Choiseul's liberal views and his alleged connivance with the rebellious Parliament. The peace of the indolent old monarch was sufficiently disturbed to induce him to get rid of Choiseul at any cost. The prime minister was informed of his disgrace by a stern letter from the King expressing great dissatisfaction with his services, and enjoining him to retire to his country house, which he was not to leave without permission.

Mercy writes shortly afterward (April 16, 1771) to Maria Theresa, giving a strange picture of the court:

«It is almost impossible that your Majesty should form a correct idea of the horrible confusion which reigns here. The throne is disgraced by the extensive and indecent influence of the favorite, and the wickedness of her partizans.

«The nation shows its feeling by seditious remarks and disloyal pamphlets, where the person of the sovereign is not spared. Versailles is the abode of treachery, spite, and hatred; everything is done through motives of personal interest, and all honorable feeling seems to be discarded.»

¹ The Duc de Choiseul was also Duc de Praslin.



LOUIS XVI
MARIE-ANTOINETTE
AT THE
AGE OF 15 YEARS

DESIGNED BY
W. H. ALLEN
FOR J. A.

Madame du Barry had proved her power, and Maria Theresa was too good a politician not to draw her own conclusions as to the necessity of conciliating the favorite. But here she met with unexpected resistance from Marie-Antoinette, who would not stoop to any advances toward a woman she despised.

In vain Maria Theresa brought forward the plausible argument that the Dauphine had no right to judge her grandfather or to look upon Madame du Barry's position as different from that of any other lady admitted to the court. For once Marie-Antoinette was rebellious, and plainly declared to her mother that she would do anything to satisfy her except what was "contrary to honor."

Great was the wrath of the Empress, who in her reply showed so much indignation at the insinuation that she could advise anything "contrary to honor" that the poor young Dauphine finally was driven to half measures, which, as usual, satisfied no one, and decidedly displeased Madame Adelaide, whose aversion for Madame du Barry was not concealed, and who required the same attitude from her nephew's wife. In all these difficulties the Dauphin was too timorous and too undecided in his actions to be of any real use or support to the young wife thus besieged by conflicting advice and exigencies. Although the marriage of the Comte de Provence was in serious preparation, the royal brothers were still such absolute school-boys that they quarreled and fought even in the presence of Marie-Antoinette, who on one occasion hurt her hand in trying to separate them. They were all, in fact, mere children, and should be judged as such.

The Dauphin had received a good, plain education, and possessed a considerable amount of stolid good sense, with the best and most honorable feelings. He was thoroughly kind-hearted and good-natured; unfortunately, he was aware of his external deficiencies, and was consequently so painfully shy and timid that his natural awkwardness was considerably increased. He seldom knew what to say or do, or when it should be said or done. This unfortunate hesitation followed him through life, and was the principal cause of many misfortunes. Even toward his young wife, whom he deeply loved, he could not bring himself to show his real affection; and although always kind and particularly good-natured, he seemed indifferent and even cold in his treatment of her.

The Comte de Provence was more intelligent than his elder brother, and rather pedantic, fond of classic studies and quota-

tions. He was jealous of the Dauphin's superior rank, and quite convinced that he himself was far more capable of filling his position. In this he was, perhaps, not wholly mistaken. He was reserved and prudent, but neither straightforward nor sincere; he had, however, far more tact than the Dauphin, and knew better how to steer his way through court intrigues and cabals.

The Comte d'Artois was a complete scapegrace, who behaved like a spoiled child and followed his very questionable tastes without restraint. Nevertheless, his appearance and manners distinguished him favorably from his brothers—that is, when he chose to behave like a gentleman, which was not always the case.

The question of the marriage of the Comte de Provence, soon to be followed by that of the Comte d'Artois, was a subject of fresh anxiety to Maria Theresa and her faithful Mercy. Would the Princess chosen be a friend or an enemy? What would be her influence over the King and the "Mesdames"? To the latter the final choice of a princess of Savoy, daughter of the Prince of Piedmont (afterward King of Sardinia), was agreeable,—any one rather than an Austrian,—and many cutting insinuations were thrown out by Madame Adelaide, sometimes endured with seeming unconsciousness, sometimes taken up sharply, by Marie-Antoinette.

"If mama could see how things go on here, she would be less severe in her judgment of me," said the Dauphine to Mercy; "matters are really unendurable."

The Princess of Savoy arrived—shy, insignificant, and absolutely devoid of beauty. Her portraits give the idea of a dark, full face with coarse features and thick lips, redeemed only by fine dark eyes. But the first impression of the King was unfavorable. "She is very ugly," was his characteristic remark. The Dauphin, with his usual blunt sincerity, expressed much the same opinion to his brother, who, to his credit, replied with dignity, "I like her as she is."

There could be no comparison between the Dauphine and her sister-in-law—a fresh source of envy, increased by the marked preference shown by the King to the pretty and graceful Dauphine. With her natural warmth of feeling, aided by the politic advice of Mercy, Marie-Antoinette tried in every way to propitiate the Comtesse de Provence, and, though with some fluctuations due to ill-natured remarks from the "Mesdames," she succeeded in establishing friendly intercourse; but from time to time

small incidents revealed a degree of duplicity on the part of both the Comte and Comtesse de Provence which especially shocked and chilled the open-hearted frankness of Marie-Antoinette.

On one of these occasions she ran to her husband and embraced him, saying earnestly: «I feel that I love you every day more and more. Your honesty and frankness charm me, and the more I compare you with others, the more I know how much greater your worth is than theirs.»

This effusive speech, although so evidently sincere, did not suffice to give confidence to the too diffident Prince. Some time after this incident he suddenly asked his wife, «Do you really love me?» She earnestly replied, «Indeed I do; and every day I esteem you more highly.»

He seemed happy on receiving this assurance; but his uncouth manners and awkward ways often irritated the Dauphine, who lost patience and reproved him sharply. He showed no anger at these remonstrances, but his eyes would fill with tears. When she saw this she would embrace him, and her own tears would flow; but notwithstanding her efforts and his good intentions, the attempt to civilize the Dauphin seemed hopeless.

As a boy he had been neglected, and, with his very sensitive heart, the absence of all tenderness and affection about him had made him shrink within himself and become incapable of expressing what he well knew how to feel. After the death of his mother he had said mournfully: «Whom can I love now? No one loves me here!» He now loved his wife, but could hardly believe that she returned his affection.

The death of the Duc de la Vauguyon delivered Marie-Antoinette from an adversary, if not an enemy. Unhappily, the Duc d'Aiguillon, who had replaced Choiseul as prime minister, headed the anti-Austrian party, and was on terms of intimate friendship with Madame du Barry. This was enough to cause intense dislike on the part of Marie-Antoinette, which she showed with her characteristic but impolitic frankness. In vain her wary mother and Mercy remonstrated, both understanding only too well that she was wilfully creating a dangerous enemy.

The marriage of the Comte d'Artois to the sister of the Comtesse de Provence soon followed, attended by the usual intrigues. The Princess was not endowed with more beauty or grace than her sister, though with a better complexion—her only superiority. But she was less intelligent and more disagreea-

ble in manner. From the first arrival of the Piedmontese princesses, the daughter of the German Cæsars could not maintain her position without incessant struggles. In her dislike for court trammels, she had gladly allowed Madame Adelaide to continue to preside over the official circle in the evenings, which was her own prerogative as future queen; but Mercy now insisted upon her right being immediately claimed, lest it should be usurped by the Comtesse de Provence, who would thus be placed in a superior position.

«Trifles light as air» caused incessant squabbles, notwithstanding the amiable efforts of Marie-Antoinette to promote peace and affectionate intimacy with her sisters-in-law. The aunts interfered, taking part now with one, now with another, but more frequently blaming Marie-Antoinette.

The state visit of the Dauphin and Dauphine to Paris, which ought to have taken place on their marriage, but which had been constantly deferred, was at last granted by Louis XV. The Dauphine won all hearts by her grace and charm of manner; even the Dauphin sufficiently conquered his habitual shyness to produce a favorable impression; and when they both appeared on that balcony of the palace of the Tuileries¹ where so many princesses have been presented to the population of Paris, the enthusiasm with which the Dauphine was greeted knew no bounds.

Marie-Antoinette, describing the scene to her mother, the Empress, exclaims: «How happy we should feel in our state, on winning so easily the love of a whole nation! And yet nothing is so precious. I felt this deeply, and shall never forget it.»

The Empress continued her exhortations and reprimands, without ever provoking rebellion on the part of her really remarkably submissive daughter, who tried to improve, renewed her resolutions, and, though with fluctuations, read more regularly with the Abbé de Vermond, studied music, and made considerable progress, especially on the harp, which she particularly liked. She also danced very gracefully and well. The poor Dauphin took lessons with her, but with his ungainly figure and heavy steps never reached the desired result. The Empress complained of her daughter's letters as too laconic and cold; but when exhorted by Mercy on the subject of showing affection to her mother, poor Marie-Antoinette replied: «I love the Empress; but I fear her, even at a distance. When I write I never feel at ease with her.»

¹ The last royal bride who appeared there was the Empress Eugénie.

To this Maria Theresa replies: «Do not say that I scold, that I preach, but say: (Mama loves me, and has constantly my advantage in view; I must believe her and comfort her by following her good advice.) You will find the benefit of this, and there will then be no further shadow between us. I am sincere, and I exact great sincerity and candor toward myself.»

But in writing to Mercy the Empress speaks severely of Marie-Antoinette. «Notwithstanding all your care and discernment in directing my daughter, I see only too clearly how unwilling are her efforts to follow your advice and mine. In these days only flattery and a playful tone are liked; and when, with the best intentions, we address any serious remonstrance, our young people are wearied, consider that they are scolded, and, as they always suppose, without reason. I see that this is my daughter's case. I shall, nevertheless, continue to warn her when you see that it may be useful to do so, adding some amount of flattery, much as I dislike that style.» She adds that she has not much hope of conquering her daughter's «indolence.»

Notwithstanding her mother's asperity, Marie-Antoinette really loved her; if she knew that the Empress was ill in health or unhappy, she wept bitterly and seemed miserable. With regard to the vexed question of the readings with the Abbé, the few books the titles of which are quoted are so uninteresting that her dislike for them cannot cause surprise.

The enthusiastic reception which the young couple had met from the Parisians led them to return to Paris and appear at the opera and theaters, where they were always well received. But the young members of the royal family, encouraged by the free use of these pleasures, took a strong fancy to see the public masked ball at the Opéra. Every precaution being taken as to the manner in which they were surrounded, so as to obviate the evident drawbacks to such an amusement, the King consented to the freak, which was much enjoyed. Unfortunately, this was the beginning of the excessive liking shown at a later period by Marie-Antoinette for such diversions.

Theatricals also became a passion. The young princes and princesses got up charades and even plays in their private apartments, with only the Dauphin as spectator; and so far there was no harm. The Dauphin, seeing how much all this was enjoyed, established a small theater in his apartments, where short, amusing plays were performed by

professional actors; these, too, were received with delight. There were, however, balls given in the palace which the Dauphine liked sufficiently to remain till six o'clock in the morning; she then heard mass, and went to bed till two o'clock in the afternoon. On such occasions it may be supposed that the literary interviews with the Abbé were omitted.

The pleasures which they shared with the King, had other serious drawbacks. In one evening at the King's play of lansquenet, the Dauphine won twelve hundred louis.¹ Much annoyed at her success, she tried to lose the sum again; finally, at the end of the game, she retained seven hundred louis. The next morning she sent fifty louis to each of the two principal parishes of Versailles for the poor, and consulted Mercy as to the disposal of the remainder, declaring that she would keep nothing for herself. Mercy advised her to divide the sum between her servants, who had now remained a year and a half without wages; this the Dauphine effected immediately, which caused general satisfaction. Mercy notes that she was not naturally generous, and in general she did not spontaneously show even sufficient liberality for the requirements of her high position.

On April 28, 1774, Louis XV felt the first symptoms of illness while at Trianon, his favorite summer palace adjoining Versailles, to which he returned immediately. During the night of the 29th the characteristic eruption of smallpox appeared in its worst form. With admirable devotedness, the King's daughters came to his bedside, notwithstanding the dreadful danger of contagion, and remained there day and night till his death. Marie-Antoinette had asked admittance to his room, but, for very evident reasons, neither the heir apparent nor his wife was allowed to breathe an atmosphere so dangerous that more than fifty persons took the smallpox, merely from having crossed the gallery before the door of the King's room. Monsieur de Létorières took the disease fatally, merely through having opened the door to look at the King for two minutes.

Regardless of danger, the Archbishop of Paris came to Versailles. He was anxious to secure the means of repentance and a Christian death to the wretched sinner; but, at the same time, he declared that he would not allow the last sacraments of the church to be administered to the dying man unless Madame du Barry were previously dismissed

¹ The louis was then worth nearly twenty-five francs (between four and five dollars).

from the palace. On the 4th of May the Duchesse d'Aiguillon took her to a country house belonging to the Duc d'Aiguillon. There was consequently no further obstacle to the administration of the last rites of the church. Shortly afterward his condition became more alarming, and it was evident that the end was at hand.

The courtiers crowded in the large room called the «Salle de l'Œil de Bœuf,» where they habitually awaited the King's pleasure. The carriages were in readiness to take the royal family to Choisy; a lighted candle placed in the window of the King's apartment was to be extinguished as the signal for departure, which the fear of contagion, in addition to other considerations, caused to be impatiently expected.

The candle was extinguished; the great clock was stopped at the fatal hour—3 P. M. It was the 10th of May, 1774. The rush of the courtiers, with a noise like thunder, as they hastened to pay homage to the new sovereign, was the first announcement of the great event to the young heir and his wife. Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette burst into tears, and with a joint impulse fell on their knees, exclaiming: «God help us and

protect us! We are too young to reign!» The King was not yet twenty; the Queen was in her nineteenth year.

Madame de Noailles came into the room where they had remained together in seclusion and anxious expectancy, and addressing them by their new titles, begged them to receive the dignitaries who had come to pay homage to the King and Queen. The Queen appeared leaning on the King's arm; weeping bitterly, she received the first visits of the royal family and the principal officials; but the physicians urged the necessity of immediate departure. The carriages were ready, and the whole court set off for Choisy, leaving the wretched remains of the late sovereign to the care of servants and workmen. The unfortunate man who soldered the lead coffin died within twenty-four hours. The body was taken to St. Denis, the burial-place of the kings of France, during the following night, with a military escort, followed by the execration of the populace loudly expressed on the way. The scandalous reign of Louis XV was ended; a new reign was beginning.

«Le roi est mort!»

«Vive le roi!»

Anna L. Bicknell.

THE BLOOD-RED BLOSSOM.

«WHENCE comest thou, Child, when April wakes,
So phantom-fair through these green brakes?
Why wilt thou follow, fond and fain,
My footsteps to the wood again?

«Why, as I rest by this gray rock,
Do thy wet eyes the violets mock?
Oh, tell me why in thy white bosom
Thou ever wearest the blood-red blossom?»—

«Thou comest to watch the violets die,
And over early love to sigh;
Thou comest to watch the wild rose waken,
And drop thy tears o'er love forsaken.

«And wouldst thou know why these three
years,
When April wakes, I rise in tears?
And wouldst thou know why in my bosom
I wear forever the blood-red blossom?

«'T was here I grew, warm nature's child,
Too young to be by love beguiled;
I took the mantle of the spring
To be my infant covering.

«My heart was full of tender loves,
Soft as a dove-cote full of doves;
I brought the violets kisses true,
Warm as the sun and fresh as dew;

«Loved to-day and wished the morrow,
Went blue-eyed and knew no sorrow,
Dreaming what I saw, and seeing
What I dreamed, a gentle being;

«Seeing, dreaming, loving all,
What should such a child befall,
Save the sunshine, save the breeze
Blowing to the shining seas?

«Oh, fair I flowered in opening youth,
Too pure to doubt that love is truth;
I took the fragrance of the May
To be the sweetness of my clay.